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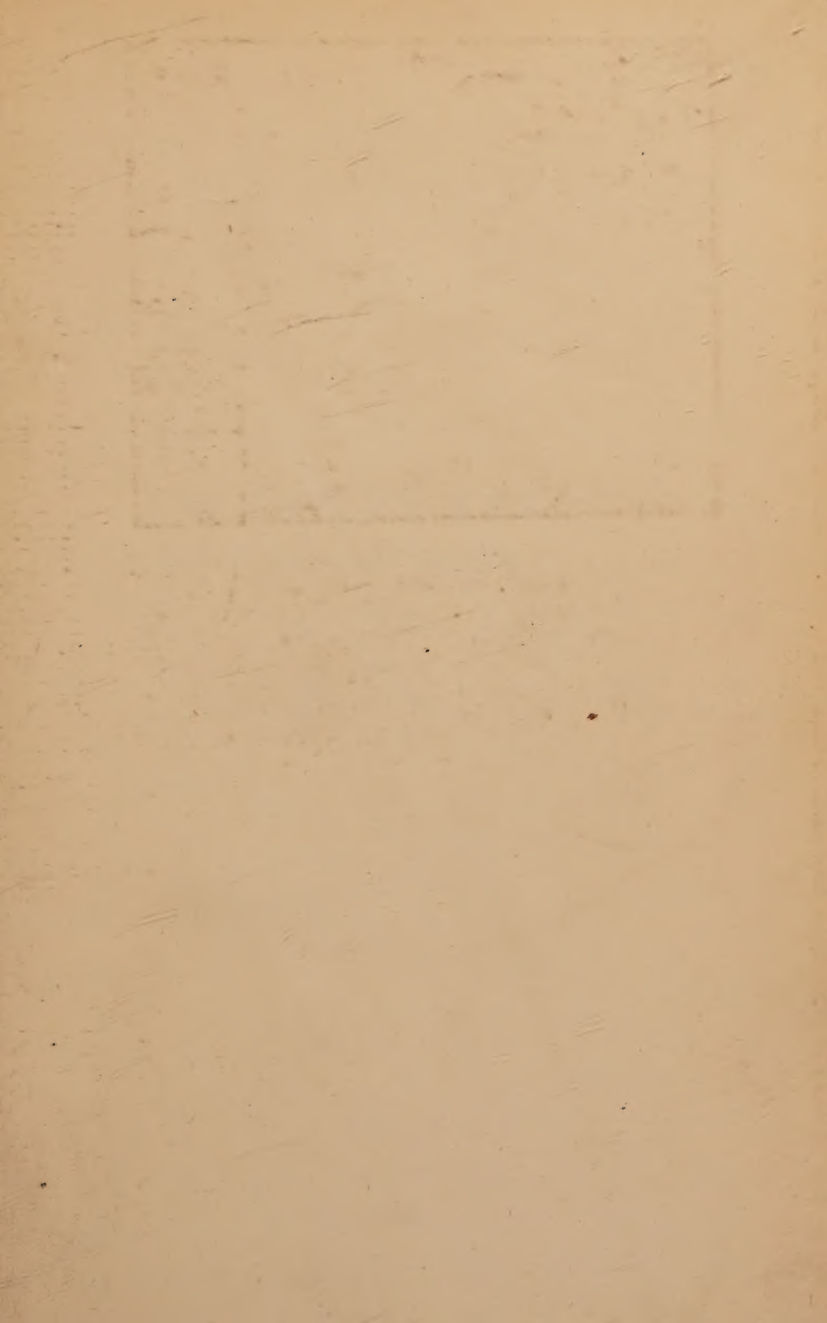
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THE SON OF MAN

AMONG THE SONS OF MEN

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THE SON OF MAN

AMONG THE SONS OF MEN

BY THE RIGHT REV.

W. BOYD CARPENTER D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF RIPON

HON. D.C.L. OXON.

Οὐκ ἀφήσει ἀσθενῆσαι ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ νομῇ αὐτῶν

Psalms of Solomon

THE SON OF MAN

AMONG THE SONS OF MEN

BY THE RIGHT REV.
W. BOYD CARPENTER D.D.

LONDON

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TO THE MEMBERS OF
MY WORKING MEN'S (Good Friday) COMMITTEE
IN LEEDS.

We need to believe, dear friends, that Christianity is not a mere venerable heirloom, but a living faith. We need to believe, not in a God who, having made the world, sent it to spin uncared for through space, but in a God who lives and works ceaselessly in His universe. We need to believe, not in a Christ who once wrought something for the world, but in a Christ who is even now with us. We need to believe, not in a Spirit which inspired men long ago, but in a Spirit who to-day strives within us for good. We are daily in danger of mistaking means for ends, and of setting our faith on dead things when our trust should be in the living God, who is (not who was or may be, but who is) the Saviour of all men. We need to believe that what the Son of God was among men eighteen hundred years ago, He is among the sons of men now.

You, dear friends, have been loyal helpers with me in seeking to make men realise this faith, and

*To you I dedicate this Book,
in which I have tried to trace some of the workings of
His love towards the sons of men.*

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HEROD

"He answered him nothing"

LUKE xxiii. 9

HEROD

SILENCE is often more effective than speech. In the stillness, when there is neither speech nor language, there are yet voices which may be heard. When the sound of thunder and earthquake and fire has ceased, there is a still small voice which is greater than their roaring. When the noises of the world have ceased for some human soul, and we enter the room of death, the silent lips of the dead, no longer able to plead with us for our good, have a more eloquent persuasiveness than life and utterance could give. Speech is a weapon of the living, but silence is the eloquence of the dead, which may prove victorious when speech has failed. It is a power which the living may use, and discover that its gold is more effective than the silver of the most artful speech.

Why did He, who spoke as never man spoke, keep silence before Herod? We read that He answered Him nothing.

THE SON OF MAN AMONG THE SONS OF MEN

The marginal references of the passage seem to explain it by our Lord's character ; for they refer us to Isaiah liii. and 1 Peter ii., passages which give prominence to the silence of meekness. Thus the silence of Christ is explained by the meekness of His character. It was because of His gentleness, "as a lamb before its shearers," that He was silent on this occasion. This hardly seems an adequate explanation. It might suit the silence before Pilate, where, when He was vehemently accused of many things, He answered him nothing, but it hardly meets His silence before Herod. His silence before Pilate was silence before accusations ; his silence before Herod was silence before questions. Herod "questioned with Him in many things ; but He answered him nothing."

It is well to remember that our Lord ever evinced a readiness to adjust His action to the needs of men. There are three classes of speakers in the world ; there are those who never forget themselves, and their utterances are always set by the remembrance of their reputation ; there are others who possess the quality of intellectual eagerness, and who speak at once on the question before them without much regard for the ethical effect of their words on others ; there are yet others who govern their speech by the remembrance of those who hear, and who never lose

sight of the moral advantage of the audience. In order to belong to the first it needs only to be ambitious and adroit ; to belong to the second, there needs only an active and truth-loving mind ; to belong to the last class needs deep knowledge of human character, grave considerateness, much self-control. To the first class our Lord by no means belonged ; He never regarded Himself. He so far belonged to the second class, that He could deal directly with the subject in hand, as one who loved truth. But in all His utterances He never forgot the listener ; for He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He therefore would at times set aside the intellectual interest of some topic in order to lead men's thoughts to the deeper, to the ethical and spiritual principles of faith and life. Examples of this will occur to our minds. With Nicodemus and with the woman of Samaria He tracks the thought behind the speech, and leads the questioners inward and downward into themselves that He may lead them upward to the God of their life.

If this was Christ's mode of action we may look for the significance of His silence in His wisdom as well as in His meekness, in His remembrance of His hearer as well as in his own characteristic of gentleness and forbearance.

We may do this the more readily, when we call to

mind that our Lord on other occasions used silence as a weapon. Before the woman of Canaan He was silent, with the silence which stimulated to more earnest effort. Before the accusers of the woman taken in sin—a passage which even if not genuine may, I think, be taken as characteristic—He was silent with the silence of disapproval. And even in the case of His silence before Pilate, though it showed His meekness, we cannot but think that it carried with it, and was intended to carry with it, the rebuke of those who were maddened by malice and lost to candour. His silence might remind them that accusations ceased to be important when accusers ceased to be truthful.

The silence of our Lord, then, in the case before us must be viewed as a designed silence. It was by it that He sought to reach Herod; and the significance of His silence then must be sought in the character of Herod.

To describe the character of Herod briefly, it is enough to say that he was a man of some taste and some indolence; that he was ostentatious and treacherous, passionate and self-indulgent; and that he desired to stand well in the opinion of men. It would take too long to justify in detail the whole of this description; but it is the picture given in contemporary history. His early experience of life

had made him averse to movement and danger ; he would fain, after the exciting days of his youth, be let alone. He liked to display his splendour in surprising banquets and in sumptuous architecture. He sought to conciliate the good opinion of the Emperor and Empress by building cities in their honour. He was wishful to win popularity among the Jews, hopeless as the task might appear ; and when he built Tiberias, the wants of the Jews were not forgotten, for he built for them a spacious synagogue. His purpose was always towards himself ; and except when demented by passion he never forgot his own interests. He has been called a wily sneak : our Lord called him "that fox." Even when his passions master him he does not forget to be treacherous. The wrong which he did to his brother, when he betrayed his wife, was a political blunder, and led to disastrous results ; it was a wrong which was marked with a double baseness, for it appears to have been planned at a time when Herod was accepting the hospitality of the brother whom he deceived.

We are thus in possession of the general features of Herod's character : he is a man with a love of display, a taste for the beautiful, indolent, cunning, passionate, open to sentiment and eager for esteem ; he is not without moments of higher impulse, but

passion and intrigue have grown into habits, which leave small room for the play of better feelings.

We may now turn to the picture of him given in the Gospels ; and here we can see him under the influences which were at work in his life. We see the character of the man, when brought to the test of circumstances and solicited by the rivalry of opposing demands of good and evil. Perhaps he is best described as a man with two angels—a good and a bad angel—in his life.

His good angel was a man, whose lonely figure had attracted the attention of all classes—a foremost religious influence in his day—a prophet, yea more than a prophet—a man of unflinching fidelity, possessed of a rare clearness of moral vision, the power of whose words and life was felt amongst all ranks ; a guileless and heroic soul, a burning and a shining light—John the Baptist.

His bad angel was a woman, ambitious, restless, cruel—Herodias—the wife of the brother whom he had betrayed. Between these rival influences we are not surprised to find Herod vacillating and bewildered. Commentators have sometimes been puzzled at the apparent contradiction in the narrative (Mark vi. 20, Revised Version), which declares that Herod heard John gladly, and yet was perplexed. Whatever difficulty criticism may find, psychology

need find none in the statement. It is just what we should have expected to find in such a man as Herod. In one respect Herod hated John. John was an unmistakable power in the land. Daily past Livias, the palace-fortress of Herod, there streamed the multitudes who flocked to John's baptism. The encampment of those who sought the new prophet was not more than from four to six miles distant from Herod's castle. Herod dreaded the growing influence of this marvellous man. To his suspicious nature it did not seem difficult to imagine that John might rouse to revolt the people who crowded to him from all sides, "every one" of whom, as Josephus tells us, "was greatly exalted by his words." He thought that there was reason for fear.

On the other hand, a man of Herod's wily temperament might equally be alive to the advantage of attaching such a man as John to himself. A man of such transcendent popular power would be no mean political ally. Moved by motives of policy, Herod might well argue the questions of what he had to hope and to fear from John the Baptist. Further, the radiant purity of John's character, his splendid adherence to what was right, could not fail to make itself felt. All men counted John for a prophet. In Herod's eyes the Baptist was a good man ; he might also prove to be useful. Suspicion,

worldly hope, sincere admiration, contended together in his mind. It is not then to be wondered at that Herod was perplexed, and yet heard him gladly.

The moment of crisis came when the good and bad influences in his life came into direct collision.

John had only one message. He knew little of the arts and flatteries of courts. They that speak soft words, as well as they that wear soft clothing, are in kings' houses. John was a preacher of righteousness. Wrong, wherever it was found, was wrong. He could receive no disciple except on the ground of an absolute acceptance of the rule of righteousness. It has been thought that Herod himself mingled among those who sought to ask guidance from the Baptist. If so, his motives were in all likelihood the mixed motives which so commonly gather in the human heart; but if he expected John to lower his flag, or to render less weighty for the neck of a king the yoke of righteousness, he was mistaken. The blot in Herod's life was the presence of his brother's wife in the castle. John's language was unhesitating. "It is not lawful for thee to have her." The words were a declaration of war against the evil genius of Herod's life.

The supreme moment of contest was not long in coming. The uncompromising attitude of John the Baptist had so far wrought on the fears of Herod

that he had thought it safer to imprison him. As yet, however, his life had been spared. The critical hour was reached when Herod celebrated the thirty-seventh or thirty-eighth anniversary of his accession by a feast given at Machærus to his chief officers and neighbouring sheiks and magnates. It was a day in the late summer, probably in August. Salome came in and danced before Herod and his guests. The wild passion, warm with wine and delirious with the delight of ostentation and security, swept prudence from the tetrarch's mind, and he became reckless in thought and utterance. He forgot the iron hand in Rome when he ventured on his vaunting promise of giving anything to the half of his kingdom. His wild and foolish words gave the opportunity to his evil angel. The counsel of Herodias governed the choice of Salome. "John the Baptist's head" was the demand.

There can be little reason to doubt Herod's distaste for the cruel demand. If he had no personal scruple in the matter, we can well believe that he had some political misgivings: the act could not fail to be unpopular—perhaps dangerously unpopular—among the multitudes who had recognised John as a prophet indeed. His fear of the people, if no higher motive, had hitherto restrained his hand from this murder. Nevertheless, it is the fate of

those who have abandoned principle as the rule of conduct to be at the mercy of conflicting passions. His pride was at stake in this matter. He had used big words in the presence of the assembled sheiks : personal vanity wins the victory over prudence. The order is given.

A narrow gorge runs eastward from the Dead Sea, thrust in between flanking hills. On a ridge of the southern range stood the fortress of Machærus, with its corner towers rising upwards of two hundred feet above the rocky foundation. Opposite the castle stand the mountains of Abarim. Here, in scenes consecrated by the memory of the first of the prophets, the last of the prophets met his death. And with his death the good angel passed out of the life of Herod.

We have now briefly surveyed the character of Herod in its general features, and as it displayed itself in contact with circumstances, and we are in a position to understand the silence of our Lord.

Herod had silenced the voice of his good angel. The sword which fell in Machærus removed one perplexing influence of Herod's life. The voice which had troubled him with its lofty and resolute utterances could trouble him no more. But when men have silenced such voices as these, the very silence which they have won becomes a horror to

HEROD

their souls. The house is left empty, swept and garnished; the troublesome visitor will no longer come there. But the soul of man has a creative faculty; and the empty house is soon filled by the shadows of the past, and the silence is broken by those forms which memory refuses to banish and to which self-accusation gives voice. The ghosts of the past begin to fill the desolate conscience-silenced chamber, as Coleridge says, and reappear when Remorse

"Still bids Remember! and still cries 'Too late!'
And while she scares us, goads us to our fate,"

John is dead; but lo! John is alive again in the haunting memories and inevitable misgivings which crowd in upon Herod's mind. Every incident of life, every rumour of a new religious teacher, becomes charged with reasons for dread and suspicion. Does he hear of the works of the Christ? It is John! He is risen! and he is risen with new power; wonders follow his progress. "It is John whom I put to death, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." We thus get an insight into the confusions of thought and apprehensions which disturb the spirit of the tetrarch. Avenging memory lets loose her train of tormenting thoughts. Doubt and bewilderment, dread and

superstition, crowd upon the brain. The clamour within is not less intolerable than the silence which Herod's own mad deed had wrought. The yearning for the sound of a voice that is still grows strong in proportion as the tumult of the soul increases. What would he not give for some assurance from the Baptist's lips? What priceless refreshment would there not be in words which would break the hateful silence and quiet the inward and torturing voices of remorse and superstition?

We can understand the working of the man's mind; we can enter into the gladness with which he heard that Christ was being brought to him. The hope that some voice from the grave will reach him, or that from the lips of the risen Baptist he may receive some comforting assurance, is kindled into a half expectancy. He hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. He speculated on the possibility of some wonder which would bring quiet to the heart or banish the perplexity into which his wanton action had plunged him.

The death of John was a crime; it was a blunder; and it had resulted from that initial blunder when he had tempted Herodias from her loyalty. Passion had carried him away; and passion had led him through danger, perplexity, and blood. He had woven a net for his own feet. The difficulties

which had pressed upon him were due to that one sin; the crimes into which he had fallen were due to that one blunder. He longed for a power to shield him from his own past, and to assure him against the consequences of his wrongdoing, or, at least, to banish the disquieting terror which made him afraid. He had fallen in his own self-esteem; he was conscious that he had fallen in the esteem of the better part of the people; he desired some sort of understanding with the Christ. Consideration shown him by our Lord would do something to re-establish him in his own good opinion. The favour of One who was the representative of the religious movement begun by the Baptist would go far to reinstate him in the good opinion of the people. He had known only recently the pleasure of political rehabilitation; he desired to achieve religious and moral rehabilitation also. The power was before him which could accomplish this; the might of the spirit of the Baptist lived on in Christ. From Him he could receive a boon which socially would be of service; from Him he could receive an assurance which would quiet the tormentor of his soul; from Him he might hear again the voice which had once been a power in his life.

But is it well that such a voice should be heard by such a man? The desire he feels is not the

desire of a spirit to which sin has become hateful. It is the longing of a soul which yearns only to be delivered from pain, and which hopes for any wonder that will banish the pangs and perplexities which surround him. It is the longing of a mind, gloomy, superstitious, but unrepentant; it is the eagerness of a man who would fain be assured that the consequences of his wrongdoing can be repaired. He is greatly interested in the questions which his fears have suggested. He earnestly desires to see Jesus Christ; but his desire is the desire of a man who deceives himself, and imagines that the keenness of his intellectual interests in matters of religion is a sign of the religiousness of his nature.

To such a man, silence is best; for speech is of little profit. Nay, for such a man silence is best, that he may know that the silence of the voices which call to better things is the retribution which falls upon those who silence such voices by their own wantonness and hard irreverence. So although the tetrarch, nervously garrulous, starts interesting questions and seeks to draw our Lord into discussion, Christ meets him with silence, which, more eloquent than words, rebukes his past and makes him feel that there are deeds the memory of which cannot be chattered away by shallow questioning.

HEROD

When he questioned with Him in many things, He answered him nothing.

He was silent, because He would rebuke the appalling wrong. He was silent, because He would force him to face his life and his past alone. He would not banish those inward questionings, those grave misgivings, those haunting memories. Such a man is better left alone in the awful silence which his own actions have wrought. Such a man is better left in silence and alone till he begins to yearn for the voice which once appealed to his higher nature and once had power to unveil the spiritual heaven to his soul.

So our Lord was silent—not because of Herod's sin, for sin did not silence Him who carried His love near to the sinning and who spoke the words of His sweetest welcome to the weary and the heavy laden, to the fallen and the sin-burdened.

No! not because of Herod's sin was Christ silent, but because Herod had wrought that crowning wrong against his own soul, when he wickedly silenced in death the voice of God which, speaking by the Baptist, had pleaded with him against himself. He was silent, not because Herod had sinned, but because he had stilled the voice that witnessed against sin. He was silent, because for such men silence is the only weapon left. Words and speech

would only have been played with or turned aside to the detriment of the soul.

The judgment which fell upon Herod was the judgment of silence. It was the same sentence which had been pronounced on the Holy City. He who was silent before Herod had declared that the Nemesis of silence would overtake the people of Jerusalem. His voice had spoken. With wicked hands they were about to slay Him, and silence that voice which spake as never man spake ; and His last cry in the Temple was the warning of the doom of awful silence : "Your house is left unto you desolate ;" and desolate it must remain till the yearning is awakened for the ministry of the better and higher things. No more would they see the face of Him who had been their light, till they began to yearn for heaven's light again, and desire that One would come not merely with power and with comfort, but with restoration of those spiritual benefits which they had ruthlessly thrust away from them. "Ye shall not see me," said our Lord, "till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Then, when the spiritual thirst was felt, the refreshing streams might break forth ; then, when they began to hunger for righteousness, might the voice and the vision of the Righteous One be heard and seen in the midst of

them. But till this wholesome hunger was theirs, their house was left unto them desolate. Lonely was the city bereft of the familiar figure of the Christ, and silent was the Temple court which had echoed to His voice of persuasion and rebuke.

As to the nation, so to Herod, Christ was silent with the silence which is the needful Nemesis of those who silence the good.

There is no new or strange principle in this method. The law of it, if we may use the term, is found all around us. He that hath not, from him is taken that which he seemeth to have. The opportunity was his—he failed to use it; he never made it his own; it passes from him. Flying time bears his forelock ever past the hands of the idle. Powers not employed wither away. Voices of imagination and music unheeded grow silent; men lose their faculties of fancy and of song. Voices of conscience and of affection unheeded grow silent also. Our quick sense of righteousness becomes blunted; our powers of pity grow less, we grow hard and indifferent to the claims of goodness and of sorrow. Our inward temple, once the home of aspirations which went up like an evening sacrifice, once the scene of resolutions registered as vows on the altar of God, is left unto us desolate; the vows are forgotten, the evening sacrifice has ceased to be offered.

THE SON OF MAN AMONG THE SONS OF MEN

Questions indeed may rise within the mind, but within the true temple of our being there is silence.

And this comes about in our case as it did in the story of Herod. On our path of life the good and the evil angels meet with us. Conscience may be the John the Baptist in our history; the world with its seductiveness and its relentlessness may play the part of Herodias in our lot. Voices there were in our early life, prayers of good men heard round about our childhood; a sensitive conscience which taught us to blush at wrong; the influence of worship which carried us away for awhile from the engrossing pleasures and pursuits of the world; stirrings within us, which roused for a season the pure ambition of a life which should be dedicated to the good of men and the glory of God, and which should be patterned after the life of Christ Himself; once there were voices which called us to noble deeds, and visions which showed us the greatness of life. But now, perchance these visions do not come and these voices are not heard.

And then we complain; we go further, we doubt. We live in a world in which no longer God's voice is heard. He is silent, we say, and how can we believe Him when He does not speak? But once He was not silent; once He sent forth into your life His voice,—yea, and that a mighty voice. Is

He still silent, or is it not rather that the power of hearing Him has left us?

No, God is not silent; save with the silence which we have wrought within our own hearts. True, in a sense there is neither speech nor language; but yet voices, most majestic and most musical, may be heard in the hearts of men. Whenever there is a conscience ill at ease, then He speaks; wherever there is a longing to do right, then He speaks; whenever there is the prompting to a loving or heroic deed, then He speaks. If, then, we hear no voice of Him, is it not that we have silenced the voice, or dulled our ear to the hearing of His voice, which speaks in such numberless tones and in such infinite sweetness among the sons of men? At least, if He seems to be silent, let us seek out the cause in ourselves; for He never is silent. In Nature, in the conscience, in the deeds of love, in the opportunities of grace, in the life of His Son, in the witness of His Spirit, He still speaks.

The silence of which we are conscious is a witness against us. It is the witness of a neglected blessing, of a benumbed heart, of a deadened conscience, of a grieved, or—oh! let it not be said—of a quenched spirit! And even thus, by this silence which is so awful He seeks to draw us to Himself by showing

that we cannot do without Him, by awaking the longing to hear His voice. He who pleads His love in sweetest speech may seek to provoke our love by His silence. If, then, we cry out for Him, He will be found to be near. "Before they call," said the prophetic voice, "I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." In all God's world there is no part which His light cannot reach and in which His voice cannot be heard. But it is possible so to close our ears by selfishness, by worldliness, by the constant neglect of the better impulses, that these voices sound dull and far-off: it is possible to refuse to ourselves the quiet moments needful to hear.

"Unearthly minstrelsy, then only heard
When the soul seeks to hear; when all is hushed
And the heart listens."

It is possible to be carried by the powers and seductions of the world far away from the sound of the purer voices of life; it is possible to allow the better impulses to be swept away by some angry and imperious passion. It is possible to allow an intellectual attention to religious questions to be taken as a substitute for a serious and religious life. It is possible to dally with the speculative or dogmatic aspects of faith, and to be betrayed

into believing that the eager or *dilettante* interest which they awaken is the same as the interest of a soul devoted to goodness and earnest in the pursuit of righteousness and holiness. Insincerity of character can thus rob us of the best defences of the soul ; and, leaving it devoid of conscientious principles and loving aspiration, may so deafen it to the voice of the Spirit of God that it dwells at length in that awful spiritual silence in which there is no voice nor any to answer.

PILATE

"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it' "

MATT. xxvii. 24

PILATE

THE march of circumstances, which brings about so many interesting situations, brings our Lord and Pilate face to face. The contrast is great. One comes from all the splendour and luxury of Rome. The other from the simple life of Galilee. Pilate, through the slow and winding ascents of official life, and after the experience of plot and intrigue, after seeing the surprising elevations and sudden failures for which fortune or caprice is responsible, comes to sit on the judgment-seat, a man strong, educated, refined after the manner of his time, thoughtful, as some of his age were wont to be, rich and powerful, for the majesty of Rome is behind him. Jesus Christ, after a simple and laborious life spent in doing good to others, after hard fare, patient toil and numberless self-denials, came to stand as a prisoner at the bar—a peasant without claim to social distinction, without pretension to the fashionable learning of the times, weak, lonely,

unpopular, the unresisting victim of a rabble's rage.

It is a striking picture of the conjunction of events thus set before us when we see these two face to face. But the picture becomes stranger as the scene goes on ; stranger than the circumstances which brought the Roman ruler, after the hopes and fears and vicissitudes of court intrigue, to sit in judgment on the Prophet of Nazareth, is the revelation of character which takes place when they meet. We are witnesses of that unfolding of character which the meeting of man and man can hardly fail to exhibit. Like the meeting of two chemical substances, the result is the revelation of latent and unexpected forces.

The characters seem to change places ; the great one seems weak : the weak seems strong. We see beneath the sceptred symbols of earthly power an unexpected feebleness ; while in the one whom the world would deem weak there is disclosed a measureless force, not only calm amid the hard circumstances of life, but possessed also of a mysterious power of radiating strength upon the lives of other men. If the strong becomes weak, the weak is endowed with might to help the strong. The strong man acts with doubt and vacillation. He struggles against circumstances weakly and despe-

rately. He grasps at expedients, and snatches greedily at helps and evasions. On the other hand, the weak man is calm and firm, and stretches out a helping hand to the strong man who is His judge, points the way to free and manly deeds, and unfolds to him glimpses of a higher and nobler ideal of life. It is a picture of the way in which the weak things of the world confound the wise. It is a picture full of typical force.

Like all the scenes in which our Lord bore a part, it is a picture for all time. It shows the struggle; it shows the end. It shows the victory of worldly strength, which is barren and degrading. It shows, on the other side, how moral power may snatch victory out of the jaws of defeat. It shows the collapse of material power. Even in the hour when Pilate is exercising his power, his might is seen to shrink down into cringeing, abject, and apologetic weakness. It shows Christ, on the contrary, moving forward in the midst of suffering and scorn with the calmness of a conqueror, and bestowing help upon those who are weak, as the victor in his triumph bestows largesse on the crowd. In the region of temporal history Pilate gives sentence against Jesus Christ. In the kingdom of eternal ethics Christ passes judgment on Pilate.

It is a story which shows the weakness that may

coexist with the outward signs and circumstances of pomp and power.

But it is not for us who see the weakness to condemn. We are all weak, and often we are weak without the pressure of the circumstances which surrounded Pontius Pilate. It will be well to remind ourselves of the precariousness and peril of his position.

He was the servant of Rome, whose policy was to weaken and absorb or incorporate other peoples. To her belonged that unscrupulousness which is the temptation of force, and that suspicion which is its Nemesis. In her view, cruelty was wrong where it was needless, but weakness in affairs was the worst of crimes. It irritated her to hear of paltry border wars and petty insurrections in insignificant provinces. Judæa was not much in the eyes of Rome. Its relative importance was probably less than Burmah to ourselves ; but, nevertheless, the politicians of Rome would find some cause of complaint against the man who failed to keep peace in his province, or dealt weakly or hesitatingly with any movement of insurrection. They would have their easy opportunity against such a governor in the character of Tiberius.

This brings us to a second difficulty of the position. Pilate was the servant of Tiberius. Tiberius

was by character and disposition gloomy, jealous, suspicious, and capricious. Sickness, too, had made him irritable; and the recent treachery of Sejanus had served to aggravate his natural suspiciousness. Pilate served a people in whose eyes weakness was a crime; and he was at the mercy of a sovereign whose suspicions might view timidity as disloyalty. But his difficulties did not end with those whom he served.

Pilate was the governor of the Jewish province. The people who were entrusted to his administration were turbulent and crafty. He had had experience of their wild outbursts of revolt, and the time was one when some fresh attempt was easy and likely. A great concourse had gathered together for the feast. The spark of revolution might readily inflame the crowd. Every symptom of insubordination needed to be carefully watched. The smallest pretensions to independence might be significant of some subtle plot among a people whose mood was often rebellious, and whose festival excitement might ripen them to revolution.

Pilate, therefore, was placed in circumstances of grave difficulty. He was surrounded on all sides by snares; he knew not what mine was prepared beneath his feet. He knew that everywhere there was intrigue, and always the uncertainty of a reckless and fanatical people.

Such were the circumstances ; and it is in the light of these circumstances that we must judge Pilate's character. We must neither exaggerate, nor make light of their influence. He is an uncharitable man who does not weigh circumstances when judging the conduct of others. He is a weak man who blames circumstances instead of judging himself. Circumstances, it is often said, mould men ; but it often depends upon a man himself after what fashion these circumstances shall mould him. Events are the graving tool of time ; but the form which time hews out is largely dependent upon the directing hand of a man's own resolution. The very circumstances we have detailed were tests of Pilate's character. We have endeavoured to measure the circumstances. We need now to measure the man. We must try and understand what manner of man he was who was exposed to these testing influences.

What was Pilate's character ?

The estimates of his character have been divergent and even contradictory. He has been canonised in some quarters. In others his uneasy spirit has been thought to haunt the lone mountain-top, as though driven to the damnation of restlessness by the burden of an unpardoned and unpardonable sin.

Extremes are mostly mistaken. Pilate was not

wholly bad, neither was he a saint. He was simply a man whose characteristics are easily recognisable as common to human nature.

He was not, I think, a man of brutal indifference and hard passionless cynicism. He seems to me to have been a man with some refinement, reflective, almost philosophical, possessing the literary habit, and with it, as so often happens, an impatience of the vulgar matters which excite the crowd, with a certain indolence which nevertheless did not kill his ambition or dull his interest in philosophical questions, with more love of speculation than desire for decision; weak morally, timid politically, and yet driven by weakness into acts which looked like relentless cruelty; for the worst cruelties of the world are the product of weakness and fear. He was one of those men whom we wonder at and pity, for they are weak men placed in circumstances which need vigour and calmness. Such are the men who, if placed in quiet and peaceful times, might ripen into philosophical mildness and *dilet-tante* amiability, tinged with a pleasant and not very serious cynicism; but who, in stormy and troublous days, being thrust into positions of high trust and imperative responsibility, hesitate, evade, vacillate, resolve and unresolve, and end by being the perpetrators of horrors which revolt the world,

and which would have been impossible to sterner and stronger natures.

At his side is his wife, a woman who can share his love of philosophical investigation, whose mind goes forth to deeper questions than the intrigues at Rome or the insubordination of the rabble at Jerusalem, with a calmer disposition than his, more heroic, perhaps because less alive to the difficulties and dangers which beset responsible office.

This man, ambitious but weak, cultivated but indolent, with a capacity of appreciating nobler aspects of life than he had strength to follow, keenly alive to danger, yet obstinately desirous of success, contemptuous of the dulness of popular views, yet afraid of the violence of popular revolt, is the man who sits on the judgment-seat when that scene is enacted, every detail of which is now familiar to the world.

“And Jesus stood before the Governor.”

There are four stages in the drama that follows, and as these succeed one another the character of Pilate slowly unfolds itself, and at the same time we learn lessons in the wonderful and self-forgetful love of our Lord.

The first stage is the stage of investigation.

The accusation is made. It is a trumped-up accusation after all, but adroitly expressed so as to rouse

the Governor's suspicions and to appeal to his fears. The prisoner is a malefactor, He is an inciter of revolution. "We found Him perverting the people and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King." Pilate deals with the accusation by holding what we may call a private investigation. In this he questions our Lord concerning the phrase used in the accusation, but as he does so the unreality of the whole proceeding dawns upon his mind. The prisoner before him is a poor, jaded, lowly, and helpless man. It was with a half-contemptuous pity that Pilate asked, "Art thou a king?" The answer is strange and unexpected. It is one which arouses Pilate's impatience, and yet compels his attention. The question is answered by another question. "Sayest thou this thing of thyself or did others tell it thee of Me?" Pilate answers impatiently, but he realises the fairness of the question; for it is certainly important that the matter should be faced seriously, and not as a mere irresponsible pastime.

Pilate replies that he is not a Jew, and that the accusation emanates from the Jews. He wants to know the facts. "What hast Thou done?" he asks. Our Lord's reply is frank and clear. This man who sits to judge is entitled to a full understanding. He is a man of better quality than Herod, before whom

Christ will maintain a significant silence. To Pilate, therefore, Christ speaks. His kingdom, He says, is not such a kingdom as the Jews are thinking of. There are other realms than the realms in which pomp and war, splendour and force, are the chief features. There is a realm of moral and spiritual facts. To bear witness to this kingdom Christ had come. In this realm He claimed kingship, and His sovereignty will be recognised by all those to whom truth is more than worldliness.

The reply strikes the chord of greatest responsiveness in Pilate's heart. The prisoner speaks of a kingdom of truth, that inner benediction of which philosophers had said so much, and which seemed to Pilate in his calm moments so noble and lofty a thing, far above the pleasures of indolence and the ambitions of earthly kingdoms. He had dreamed of such a realm of truth, but he had felt that it was a dream, a beautiful but intangible thing. "What is truth?" he asks. Who can grasp it? Who knows what it really is? His question was no brutal contempt; it was no rough and profane jest; it was under the impulse of a self-mocking and sad cynicism that Pilate asked, "What is truth?" With the question he ends the interview. There is no need to prolong it; he knows all that he needs to know. The case is clear enough. These dull Jews have misunder-

stood an unworldly and semi-philosophical idealist. Pilate is reflective enough to see the cause of the misunderstanding. There is no treason and no spirit of revolution here. It is fortunate that the case is so simple. He can get rid of it at once and with a good conscience. He can announce to the Jewish rulers and people that there is no harm or blame in this man, whose language they in their dulness have misunderstood. He, therefore, goes out to the Jews and announces his conclusion. "I find no fault in Him." It is Pilate's unbiassed verdict. Whatever else may happen, Pilate acquits our Lord of being a political firebrand. He is innocent of the faults of which His foes accused Him.

If Pilate hoped by announcing his verdict to get rid of the case, he was soon undeceived. He had to do with people in whom the fury of fanaticism had swept away reason and candour, and he had to confront crafty and unscrupulous leaders who knew how to fan adroitly the flame of popular passion, and to manipulate their case so as to put Pilate in the wrong.

The announcement of his decision was the signal of a yet fiercer outburst of reckless accusation. How can he say that there is no fault in one who has stirred up the people throughout the length and

breadth of the land, and has set Galilee as well as Judæa aflame with his teaching?

Pilate sees his difficulty growing greater before his eyes. He lacks the firm courage to abide by his own judgment. His natural indolence and his dislike of tumult have made him nimble at expedients. He forsakes the calm and judicial firmness of the judge. He begins to play the part of strategist in affairs. He can perhaps get rid of his responsibility. The mention of Galilee suggests his first opportunity.

Herod will be his first move. This presents double attraction to him. Herod has recently been restored to the smile of imperial favour. It would be politic to seize the opportunity of restoring friendly relations with Herod. An act which carried with it the recognition of Herod's jurisdiction would be most acceptable and sagacious. He will send Him to Herod, and so at one stroke secure Herod's goodwill and get rid of an uncomfortable responsibility. Let Herod decide; Pilate will be thankful to escape further difficulties.

But the expedient ends in nothing. Herod returns the case upon Pilate's hands. The only gain which Pilate has secured by this manœuvre is the friendship of Herod and the power of quoting him as a witness to the innocence of the accused. But the people are as implacable as ever. The twice-repeated

verdict of innocence seems only to add fuel to the flame. It is in vain that Pilate expostulates—Why, what evil hath he done? It is in vain that he quotes Herod's opinion. It is in vain that he offers to meet the popular view by a concession, and declares himself ready to strain justice so far as to inflict upon the accused the punishment of scourging. There are moments when compromise is wisdom, but there are also times when concession is a fatal weakness. It is difficult for frail and fallible human judgment so far to forecast the future as always to know when the concession should be made and when it should be refused. But there is one test at such moments which is an infallible guide to conduct if not an infallible guarantee of success ; and that test is the test which the courageous sense of justice supplies. To strain justice in deference to popular tumult is not only to sin, but it is to provoke those further demands which quickly prove that the man who has thus degraded himself and his office has degraded them in vain.

But fortune for the moment seems to favour Pilate when his perplexity is increasing. A diversion occurs in the popular demand for the release of one prisoner at the feast-time. His quick mind discerns the opportunity of a second expedient. He can evade the decision by utilising the notorious and undoubted

criminal Barabbas. He will make an offer in which the contrast will be so glaring that he may well hope that he will be able to secure himself from future responsibility. He puts before the people the choice. He will release one of the two. It must be either the unquestionably red-handed man of violence or the mild Prophet of Galilee. Has he a hope that the popular voice will prevail against the cry of the priestly class? It is a vain hope. Fanaticism hates the challenge of its own beliefs more than it hates the violation of moral law. Heterodoxy in the eyes of many is a more deadly sin than murder. To make war upon the ecclesiastical code is a worse offence than the violation of the Decalogue. Pilate's hope of evading a decision by the expedient of Barabbas is rudely shaken. The wild shout of the crowd undeceives him. "Not this man, but Barabbas!" And now Pilate reveals another and further weakness. The judge attempts to expostulate with the crowd. He appeals to them to know what he is to do. "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called the Christ?" But the ruler who condescends to wrangle about his duty is lost. The second sign of weakness is noted by the multitude. Back comes the fierce and uncompromising cry—"Let Him be crucified."

To this pass has the weak attempt to parry the

demands of duty brought Pilate, the representative of the force and majesty of Rome.

Pilate found himself no nearer the solution of his difficulties after this second expedient. He reverts to his former suggestion that he should inflict on our Lord the punishment of scourging. This time he carries it into effect, and brings forth Christ, pale and bleeding, to the sight of the crowd. Did he hope that this sight of suffering and unjustly suffered pain would work some change towards pity in the hearts of the multitude? He has forgotten that in the hour of its madness the mob has no mercy. Their renewed cries against our Lord drive Pilate to his third and perhaps his basest expedient. It is, he reflects, an affair which concerns the Jews. Why should he be obliged to determine the matter? Let them settle it for themselves. He, therefore, now changes his tactics, and bids them assume the responsibility and settle the case. "Take ye Him and crucify Him." If the Jews thought Him a criminal, let them deal with Him according to their view. Pilate finds no fault in Him. They, not he, must decide the case. But this is a sort of final as well as fatal weakness, for it is in effect the abdication of the judgment-seat. The priests are too subtle, moreover, to accept such an offer. They are determined to commit Pilate to one course or another. It is not

lawful for them to put any man to death. So they plead, and Pilate knows well the force and significance of this plea. He knows that this third expedient, like the other two, has failed.

And now a new terror takes possession of Pilate's heart. This victim of popular fury is not only accused of aspiring to sovereignty, but of claiming a divine origin. He has offended the Jews by declaring Himself to be the Son of God (John xix. 7). Can it be that there is some divine life and power within the heart of this weak man who has spoken of a kingdom higher than that of earth, of the inward kingdom of truth? "He made Himself the Son of God," say the Jews. When Pilate heard that saying he was the more afraid. He resolves upon a second interview with Christ alone.

Art thou the Son of God? he asks. But Jesus, we read, gave him no answer. Pilate is nettled at the silence. In his heart he wishes to rescue this preacher, and is he not Roman Governor? He wishes to rescue this prisoner from the madness of the people. He thinks that he has shown this wish with sufficient clearness. Yet Christ makes no reply to the ruler who has both the wish and power to save Him. Pilate is irritated. He feels that the silence of Christ rebukes Him. He wishes to force from Him some answer, and in his wish to do this, he betrays

another symptom of the weakness which seeks to re-instate itself in its own esteem after an experience of obvious humiliation, for he falls back upon the declaration of his power. The prisoner, he reminds our Lord, is in his power. "Speakest Thou not unto me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee and power to release Thee?" (John xix. 10). What reply does he expect? Does he think that Christ will plead for his clemency, or appeal to his protection, or suggest some device which will save his own life and Pilate's dignity?

The answer which Christ gives touches on none of these matters. It touches only on the responsibility of power. Power is given from heaven, and to heaven all power is responsible. You are thinking, Christ seems to say, of the people and their clamour, and of what misrepresentations of your action may be made at the imperial court. But above all these things is God, by whose permission and providence this power has come into your hands. "Thou couldst have no power against Me except it were given thee from above" (John xix. 11). The words touch the inevitableness of responsibility and the sacredness of all power of whatsoever kind. It is Christ's lesson to all rulers on the solemnity and sanctity of power.

Christ's words reach Pilate's heart. He realises

the presence of the divine justice which watches all affairs. He feels the nearness of the sacred and inward forces of life. He resolves, for the moment at any rate, to find some way to save this strange, calm, weak, majestic man. "From thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him" (John xix. 12).

Once more, then, Pilate faces the crowd ; but the man who has once yielded to weakness is doubly afraid. Like a candle which has once been lighted, it is easy to kindle the fresh fear in the coward heart. This time the form in which fear comes is to Pilate terrible indeed. The priests know the man they have to deal with ; they know the mightiest spell with which to conjure. Across the sea there is the savage and gloomy Emperor, who smiles on his friends, and regards all others with suspicion. There is a sinister power in the very name of the Cæsar, who does not easily forgive any intrigue against himself, or any slight upon his imperial power. This is the fear which is flaunted in Pilate's face. "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." Pilate hears, and he knows well with what perversions and embellishments intrigue can tell its story in Tiberius' ears.

He will try a diversion. He will banter them about their own national aspirations. This prisoner

claims to be their king. Behold your king, he had said. Shall I crucify your king? But the crowd have learnt their lesson well. They will haunt his ears with the words of fear. They will make him feel that in parleying with this case he is disloyal to the Emperor. "We have no king but Cæsar." The word is too much for Pilate. Cæsar! He sees the cruel smile and the savage frown. He can resist no more. He is clamoured down. He gives way, beaten in that stormy conflict. But yet he is anxious to appease his own uneasy conscience. He must disassociate himself from responsibility with this wrong, which nevertheless without him would not have been done. What paltry expedients have a fascination for weak, superstitious, and demoralised men! Pilate washes his hands, as though this meaningless piece of ceremonial could alter the moral conditions of the question, or remove the weighty truth from Christ's words: "Thou couldst have no power against Me except it were given thee from above." No outward ablution can wash out the stain of dishonour, or the coward betrayal of high duty. But the scruples of unscrupulous men are among the marvels of the history of morals. Bishop Odo so far honours the precept that the priest should shed no blood, that he will carry no sword to the battle, but he has no hesitation about

arming himself with the murderous mace to brain his foes. The Pharisee draws the line of right and wrong in matters of mint and anise and cummin, but the weightier matters of judgment and righteousness find no response in his conscience. There is a scrupulousness which is a sure sign of moral deterioration ; for it is the mockery of conscientiousness. The demoralisation of Pilate was complete when he washed his hands.

Pilate is the picture of a weak man set in the midst of difficult circumstances ; but, as Bishop Butler remarked, "temptation from within and from without coincide and mutually imply each other," for, he writes, "When we say men are misled by external circumstances of temptation, it cannot but be understood that there is somewhat within themselves to render those circumstances temptations, or to render them susceptible of impressions from them." Pilate had never succumbed in the hour of trial unless he had given this criminal weakness an unwarranted dominion in his nature beforehand. His delight in refined and subtle questions ; his intelligence, his desire to please, could not avail against the indolence, the ambition, and the selfishness of his nature. His good qualities were obscured and rendered powerless by his weakness. He was guilty of cruelties which made his name hated, but

it was his cowardice and weakness which betrayed him into situations from which ruinous severity seemed the only way of escape.

Yet he had in his hands the opportunity of heroism. The hours of difficulty are great men's opportunity ; the times of danger call with trumpet-voice to the heart of the brave, and all noble emotions marshal to their aid. These are the times when men show of what stuff they are. Men rise or fall at such moments. They show their courage ; like Mahomet to his trembling comrade, who said, "We are only two," they can say, "There is another, there is God" ; like Dante, they can reject the bribe, which means dishonour, and they can speak cheerfully the *Nunquam revertar*, which means continued exile from all that is dear ; like Luther, they can resolve to go forward in the way of duty though demons darken the house-tops ; or they may betray their weakness, and, like Celestine, weakly abandon their trust ; or, like Pilate, they may wash their hands.

Hard positions and difficult circumstances are posts of honour. It is something to be called to lead the forlorn hope of right in the march of human progress. This opportunity came to Pilate, but he had not the force to seize the chance and achieve an unparalleled glory.

But he was weak. We may pity the weak who fail, but can we blame them? It is not for us to judge; but we can learn. One lesson is clear. Weakness often fails, because it does not make use of the strength which is at hand. No man is beaten without remembering in the hour of his defeat the lost opportunities which might have been turned into means of victory. Pilate failed, and Pilate's name is covered with the memory of his shameful weakness: but Pilate did not fall unwarned, or fail for want of helpful and stimulating influences.

The influences of birth, home, and providential opportunity were given him.

He was a Roman, and the national and traditional characteristics of his race might have been summoned to his aid. Roman firmness and vigorous Roman administration, however much enervating vice may have become fashionable, were not wholly dead. They still must have appealed as ideals to men who had any knowledge and any patriotic love of the history of Rome. If weakness was a vice in Roman eyes, was not the consciousness of this a witness against feebleness and unjust irresolution in any Roman governor?

He had a home, and the partner of his home joys was a woman who at least was no dullard, but whose thought and sagacity went forth with sym-

pathy to her husband in his work. Her voice spoke to him in the moment of his temptation, and her voice lifted up against the fatal policy of evasion and feebleness. The dream of Pilate's wife, and the message to which it gave rise, must not be flung aside as a mere picturesque addition to the story. People do not dream of matters of which they know nothing. The occurrence of the incident suggests to us that there must have been previous thought and previous knowledge. "That just man" whose memory haunted the woman in her dreams was one who must have been more than a casual prisoner brought before the ruler. Can it have been that His fame had reached Pilate's household beforehand? Can it have been that some of His strange utterances and wonderful works had been told in the hearing of Pilate or his wife? Whatever the earlier history may have been, this woman, whose thoughtful disposition made her a helpmeet to Pilate, was evidently impressed in some way with the moral beauty and spiritual dignity of the Prophet of Nazareth, and her influence was exerted to stay the feet of her husband on the fatal downward path of irresolution and injustice.

There was yet another restraining hand which the providence of the hour brought to Pilate's aid. This was the hand of the prisoner at the judgment-

seat. The narrative shows us the singular spectacle of the weak and the accused man giving moral aid to the strong one who was his judge. Christ's replies to Pilate are not so much replies on the case as replies on the moral responsibility of Pilate at the moment. He is more anxious to save Pilate from moral ruin than Himself from death. He turns Pilate's thoughts upon himself. "Sayest thou this thing of thyself?" He speaks to him of the sublime and spiritual kingdom of the truth, higher and more enduring than any splendour of imperial Rome. He lifts His judge into the serene atmosphere of heaven. "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." He reminds Pilate of that divine source of all judgment and power to whom every judge and mighty one of the world is finally responsible. He tells that power is not a thing of pride, but a responsibility and a trust. It is given from on high. In all these the hand of help is reached forth to Pilate. Pilate sees it; his conscience makes him uneasy; he is aware that he is thrusting away from him some truly spiritual and real aid. But the weakness and ambition of his nature are too much. He struggles, but he struggles in vain, and he is swept away, a worthless and unresisting piece of wreckage, on the wave of popular tumult.

The story is the tragedy of weakness. We see the demoralisation at the close, but it has all been prepared for by the early steps of weakness and vacillation. As in the tragedy of *Lear*, we feel that the weak man has brought the tempest upon himself.

It has its lessons for a day when Christ stands before men who are ashamed to judge Him and yet afraid to acknowledge Him ; who wish to give Him some place, but are not equal to the sacrifice of accepting Him as Lord of their lives ; who wish to take popular verdicts in the place of Christ ; who avoid the necessity of personal resolve, and skirt round the edge of inconvenient responsibilities. The end of vacillation is demoralisation. The tragedy at the close seems incommensurate with the offence. But great events often creep in at the doors which our moral weakness has left open ; and before we know it we have fallen below what we thought possible, below our own self-esteem, below what we might have been. Before we realise our degradation we find ourselves thrust off the judgment-seat which we have so unworthily occupied. We discover that we are not judging Him, but that He by His meekness, truthfulness, and love, is judging us. It is better that we should realise this now, than that later we should stand

THE SON OF MAN AMONG THE SONS OF MEN

at His bar, whom we were ashamed to acknowledge as the Prophet of truth, but whom at some time, to our shame, we must acknowledge as a King indeed, ruling and judging evermore in the kingdom of His truth.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

"Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him"

MATT. X. 4

JUDAS ISCARIOT

IN the story of Judas Iscariot we have the prominent tragedy of the Gospels. We are tempted to think that we have in him a character which is so wholly abnormal that its study can afford little practical profit. His crime, we might argue, was of such magnitude and baseness, the circumstances under which it was committed were so unusual, and the personage against whom it was committed was so unique, that the sin itself must be regarded as incapable of parallel and the character of the offender must be out of comparison with ordinary life.

This statement has much truth ; but the argument on which it is based is dangerous. Arguing in this way, we must put the character of Judas into a place by itself ; he would stand as one who had appeared in the history of the world at the time of its most momentous spiritual crisis, and yet out of whose life and action no lesson could be

learned; and the story would cease to have any practical relation with human life. This I believe would be a disastrous way of dealing with the story, and in the end could only lead to a false method of estimating character. On the contrary, therefore, I believe that though the circumstances in some respects must be considered as unparalleled, yet the elements involved in the action of Judas are elements at work in ordinary everyday life. His action is made vivid and exceptional by the presence of our Lord. The circumstances were unique, but in the character of the temptation of Judas there was nothing very exceptional.

Judas Iscariot was an ordinary character, exposed to an ordinary temptation; the time was extraordinary, the events were extraordinary; but Judas acted after a fashion which, so far from being extraordinary, is a fashion in which many are still acting. The type of character which he represents is a type of character which may be met with every day.

It will be well in the first place to recall some of the theories which have been put forward concerning the character of Judas.

There are several theories advanced.

1. There is the usual or common view that he was a man of thievish disposition, overcome by the love

of money. This is probably the popular view. According to it, Judas Iscariot did a great wrong, accompanied by a deed of revolting treachery, for the sake of miserably small money gain. Now it is quite true that men have perpetrated atrocious crimes for the sake of some paltry sum of money. I have heard of a man who murdered a woman for the sake of fifteen shillings. As far as human nature is concerned, there is no difficulty in a theory which represents Judas as betraying Christ for thirty pieces of silver, but the difficulty of accepting such a theory lies in the supreme folly with which it charges Judas.

Judas occupied a position of trust in the band of the Apostles ; he was the treasurer of the little company ; he had opportunities as such of enriching himself ; he had the handling of sufficiently large sums of money to make him eager to maintain his position. On one occasion the offering of one disciple—the woman who brought the precious ointment—was roughly estimated as worth three hundred pence, a sum equal to about £10 of our money. If then gifts of this amount came into the keeping of Judas, is it reasonable to suppose that he would for the sake of an immediate gain of a far less sum of money deprive himself of the position which he enjoyed ? The thirty pieces of silver represented barely £4 of our money ; the post of treasurer among the followers of

Christ was worth more than this. The theory which seeks to explain everything by the desire of an immediate and paltry bribe is not adequate to the case.

2. Archbishop Whateley put forward another theory. It was subtle and ingenious. According to him, Judas was hardly a traitor. He was rather one who, believing in our Lord's power, sought to put Him in a position in which He would be compelled to exercise it in some startling, unique, and triumphant way. It never, according to this view, occurred to Judas that our Lord would submit to arrest or death ; in putting Him by an act of betrayal into danger, he gave Him the opportunity (which he never doubted would be used) of confounding His enemies. Such an opportunity was wanting ; nay, Judas may even have believed that our Lord desired such an opportunity ; the disciple read his Master's wishes and created the opportunity which he believed his Master would welcome and use. Christ had twice before displayed His self-protecting power, and He would do so again. Had Judas acted in this way, we could not charge him with radical badness of heart. We could not say of such a man, "Good were it if he had never been born." The language of our Lord concerning Judas is too strong and too decisive to allow us to be satisfied with this theory. (Mark xiv. 21.)

3. De Quincey's theory has some resemblance to Archbishop Whateley's, but it is even more refined. According to it, Judas believed in the power and the genius of our Lord, but he regarded Him as one who, though possessed of wonderful gifts, was yet deficient in the robustness of character which was needful for popular and political success. He concluded then to force our Lord into a position in which necessity and peril would compel Him to do what He would never do of His own free will. Here, as in the previous theory, there was no faithlessness of soul in the act of apparent treachery. The fault of Judas was rather the fault of presumption than of treason. He presumed to believe that he knew better than his Master; he presumed to sit in judgment on his Master's character; and his presumption led to the awful catastrophe. But here again the fault of Judas is a fault which has its root in a mistake and not in a disloyalty, and the words of our Lord concerning the traitor lose their fitness.

4. Professor Fairbairn has advanced another view. The betrayal was due to disappointment. The hopes which Judas had cherished were seen to be vain; the kingdom on earth was not to be. Disappointed hope turned to hate, and hate sought to avenge itself by treachery. This theory is quite in harmony with human nature; men do so act, and history can

give us cases. But the theory does not satisfy me. There are facts and conditions in the story which lie outside its range. The sin becomes one of impulse and passion. But bad and base as it was, does the type of character merit all that Christ said? And can the pilfering habits of Judas be said to be sufficiently considered?

5. I venture to propound another theory.

There are three motives which lead men to attach themselves to a new movement. Men may be moved either by conviction, or by contagious enthusiasm, or by self-interest. Of these motives, conviction and self-interest have roots, and they are strong enough to keep men loyal to the movement even after many of those who have only been moved by contagious enthusiasm have forsaken it. The sympathetic ardour which glows in many hearts has frequently no whit of intelligence in it; but conviction and self-interest are usually intelligent enough. Thus the stronger part of men join a movement through conviction; the larger part through contagion; but there is a certain portion of mankind who join it from interest.

It was so when our Lord preached. There were souls in whom moral earnestness was awake; they were anxious to know and understand the signs of the times; they desired to seek and do the highest and the best. God was the King of the world; they

JUDAS ISCARIOT

believed it; and when Christ appeared they recognised His mission as of God. They had mixed motives; for they were weak as men are weak, but they were sincere, and they welcomed Him as a Teacher and a Reformer, as the hope of Israel. Men like Andrew and Peter and James and John joined the cause of Christ with simple and sincere convictions; they believed in Him; whatever mistaken hopes they might cherish, they felt the moral and spiritual influences of His character and calling, and they believed in Him. As the movement grew, numbers gathered around it. Curiosity and indolence even may have drawn some, but the growth of the multitudes generated that heat of contagious enthusiasm which is at once so powerful and so uncertain. But the growth of the movement attracted others, who were not prompted by mere curiosity or stirred by the magnetism of the crowd. They came because it was worth considering what gain might spring from it. They joined it when they had persuaded themselves that it would profit them to do so.

To this last class belonged Judas. In a double sense he came from without. "Only of one of those chosen by Jesus" (says Hausrath) "is it certain that he was not a Galilean but a Judæan; and this solitary man from Judah, who had found admittance into the circle of the Galileans, was the one who

betrayed Him." He came from a distance ; his nature was never stirred by the passing sincerity of contagious enthusiasm. He threw in his lot with the followers of Christ with deliberation, and with faith, only so far as calculation is faith. He did believe that our Lord would achieve a great success ; he may have believed, as others did, though with more self-interested speculativeness than others, that the new Prophet was the Messiah, the destined King. At any rate, the venture is worth some risk. He joins the society. His gifts win for him a place among the foremost. He becomes not only one of the Twelve, but the one of the Twelve who holds the post of treasurer. His natural aptitudes marked him out as the fittest man for such a position. He has made himself of importance in the movement. Whenever good fortune smiles, he cannot fail to share in it.

And good fortune seemed to smile. The multitude of the followers of the movement increased. The great works of Christ and His mighty and enthralling words drew the people ; they heard Him gladly. The impression of His greatness deepened and spread. Impression grew into expectation. Expectation became impatient. The Prophet Teacher must submit to the people's will. That which their hopes and their confused faith dreamed that He

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was, He must be in fact. They determined to take Him by force and make Him a King. All this Judas must have perceived ; and the gladness of imminent success must have been his.

But the attitude of our Lord at this moment must have surprised many. Instead of courting this popular movement, He retired from it. It was not His purpose to become a temporal king. He withdrew Himself ; and His withdrawal chilled the growing enthusiasm. The hopes of the populace, easily moved, were shaken ; their expectations were shadowed by a doubt. If he was not going to be King, their hopes had been mistaken. They did not understand Him ; and when people do not understand, they distrust.

Changes in the popular mood are readily gauged by those who touch the world on its financial side, and Judas' position gave him opportunity of noticing the first symptoms of waning popularity. He felt the pulse of public opinion, and he knew when it began to beat with calmness ; he could calculate that calmness might lapse into indifference. New possibilities began to display themselves before him. Is it possible that he can have miscalculated ? Suppose that he had made a mistake ; suppose that the teacher and worker of wonders should prove to be a failure ; suppose that, instead of grasping king-

ship, He should sink so low in popular esteem that the people would no longer welcome His words, or regard Him as a prophet. He has enemies already ; Pharisee, Sadducee, and Herodian hate Him. His safety is in the enthusiasm of the people ; their indifference would be the opportunity of His enemies. A little, a very little change in the popular temper, and the whole situation would be reversed ; and Judas would find that he had cast in his lot with a losing, and not with a winning cause.

Now, what would be the natural conduct of a person without any moral convictions under such circumstances ? Matters have not declared themselves finally ; it is still possible that the cause of Christ may triumph, but it is also possible that the priestly party may be able to contrive His overthrow. Prudence would suggest such an arrangement of his affairs as to stand well with both sides. He must, to use a slang expression, hedge ; so that, whatever happened, he would be safe to win. And this is precisely what Judas does. Without breaking with the party of Christ, he opens up negotiations with the other side. He knows that overtures will be welcome, and he makes secretly the bargain of betrayal. It is the precaution of worldly wisdom. Whatever happens, he is safe. He has put the priestly party under an obligation, and

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should they triumph he will have claims on their gratitude.

On the other hand, should his earlier hopes be realised, and Christ emerge triumphant out of the coming conflict, these secret transactions need never be known. He is still one of the chosen band of Christ, high in place and prestige, and legitimately entitled to consideration in the day of success. It is part of his policy not to detach himself from Christ as long as there remains a chance of Christ's victory. Our Lord has sometimes acted with a sudden and resistless power, and wrought deliverance at the moment of direct peril. It may be so again; and Judas cannot afford to lose the chance of participation in such a glorious triumph. To the last, therefore, he keeps up the appearance of loyalty; he sedulously endeavours to disconnect himself from the arrest-party: he goes before them; he greets his Master with a kiss, as though he had come alone. All this is a part of the scheme which he has devised. His determination is to appear to our Lord as on His side, and to the priestly party as on their side.

The scheme gives the character of the man who devised it. Most men have some rag of principle which they can hoist as a flag in the hour of temptation; and, even if their principles vanish under

stress of temptation, it is because they have been overmastered in the fight. But Judas is the type of the man who has no principle. He cannot plead weakness, or the force of temptation, for the simple reason that he laid aside all principle beforehand. He has only had one guiding principle, and that is self. He is for God or for God's enemies with equal readiness, so long as he himself is safe. There are poor weakling souls who, driven by feebleness and fear, cannot bring themselves to live energetically either for right or wrong. They dance like withered leaves before every wind of fear. Such souls Dante kept on the uttermost edge of the *Inferno*, stung with the remorseless bites of those winged fears which made them loathsome to themselves. But these were weak; they lacked the hardihood of such venturesome treason as Judas perpetrated. He was ready with cold and calculating prudence to sacrifice the dearest and noblest influence of his life to secure his own interest; for him in whom self-interest has slain every better impulse of the heart—admiration, gratitude, love—there is the nethermost place in the under world; he will give it its name: his place is in the *Judecca*.

It is well to notice that Judas did not fall at once and unwarned. Characters grow: the features which attract or repel us are products of will and

circumstances ; for character is not a gift, but a formation. Judas had the same chances of better things which his brother Apostles had. There were mixed motives, no doubt, in the hearts of all. The narrative shows us that the worldly spirit sometimes broke forth in rivalry (Mark x., 33, 34, and x., 35-37), and in covetousness (Matt. xx. 26); the leaven of worldliness was there. But in the other Apostles, devotion and fidelity to their Lord overmastered the lower impulses of their hearts. "One man," as Bishop Thirlwall said, "cannot be described as more selfish than another." What is true is that one man curbs selfishness less than his neighbour does. The comrades of Judas had weaknesses and worldly desires, even as he had ; but they yielded themselves to the good influence which was so near them. They did not wholly understand Christ's teaching ; but that teaching, even when not fully grasped, being followed by willing hearts, lifted their conceptions to higher levels, and helped to free them from the moral tyranny of self. But in Judas the self-interest was allowed to grow ; he fostered it in thought ; he nourished it by habitual embezzlements of the funds entrusted to him. Character grows from habits ; and he adopted bad ones.

This was not all. He thrust away from himself the helping hand which Christ's love extended to

him. From the earliest time to the latest moment, Christ sought to save the traitor from himself.

Let us recall Christ's method. He did not receive recruits without caution. Take the case of the young and wealthy man who sought eternal life. Our Lord made the young man sift his heart. He brought him to the test : "Sell all that thou hast." It is a picture of our Lord's method. No man should join His band under any mistake if possible. Christ sought to arm with weapons against self-deception those who volunteered to follow Him. Above all things, He made it clear that riches and worldly wealth were not to be looked for by those who would come after Him. The incidents recorded in the close of Luke ix. are enough to convince us of this. "A certain man" (was it Judas ?) "said unto Him, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." And Jesus said unto him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay his head." No words can more clearly point out that earthly advantage must neither be sought nor expected by those who would follow Him. If the certain man in this case had been Judas, full of speculative hopes and dreams of possible wealth and splendour, the answer of Christ is an explicit caution; nay, a rebuke of any such anticipations ; but whether this "certain man" were

Judas or not, it is enough to remind ourselves that our Lord's method was to place before those who sought Him the need of complete self-surrender, and the banishing of worldly dreams and futile expectations of temporal glories. Not unwarned then (we may well conclude) did Judas attach himself to Christ's company.

There were after-warnings also. Generally, the tone of our Lord's teaching respecting worldliness was one constant warning. To a man like Judas, trying to secure his own interest, and making this the prime object of his thoughts, the words, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," would come like a trumpet-toned note of alarm.

But besides general language like this, there were utterances of our Lord's which, in the light of Judas' character, sound like direct and special efforts to awake him from his dream of self. We may, for example, read in the light of Judas' designs the parable of the unjust steward. The steward has wasted his master's goods; he has been unfaithful in his trust. Judas has been unfaithful; he has tampered with the bag. The steward is awakened by the danger he is in of losing his position. How does he act? He secures his retreat by making negotiations with the other side. Judas is alarmed by the thought that his position may be insecure.

How does he act? He opens up negotiations with the enemies of Christ. It is a clever scheme. As far as worldly and unprincipled sagacity can go, it is shrewd. The actor shows a determination to secure himself at all costs. But does it answer? In this world it may. Unscrupulous smartness does sometimes succeed on earth. The faithless steward may secure for himself a refuge among those partners of his guilt whom he has placed under an obligation—yes, in the world, in earthly habitations, it may be so; but such methods will secure no welcome, when men fail, in eternal habitations. The irony of the warning is an arrow for the heart of Judas.

Or, again, the parable of the wedding garment had its message for the traitor. It was one thing to refuse to come to the wedding; it was another to come, and to come in the beggarly array of one's worldliness. To disregard the invitation was a fault; but to accept it without entering into the spirit of it—to be there in hollow and empty form, the mockery of its gladness, a dark shadow upon its brightness; this was to provoke a darker doom than the sin of refusal met. Did the heart and mind of Judas not feel that the picture had familiar touches, and that the message of the parable was for him as well as for others?

Still more emphatic is the warning, given at the

time when our Lord had by His action refused the kingdom, and when consequently doubts began to grow strong in the mind of Judas. The disciples were diminishing in numbers; the refusal of the temporal crown followed by the spiritual teaching respecting the bread of life was too much for the carnal-minded among Christ's followers; the signs of disaffection and discontent were easy to read. The heart of Judas was already a traitor's heart; worldliness and self-interest were slowly and surely vanquishing every loyal obligation. Then it is that our Lord speaks the words which reveal in one moment the schemer's heart in all its hideousness,

Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Must not the soul of Judas have whispered to itself, "It is I. To this image must I come if I allow this thing to gain the mastery over me?"

Christ's efforts to save His disciple sinking into such an abyss of baseness did not end here. As the crisis draws near, He puts forth fresh and final attempts to save him. "Ye are not all clean," He said, at the time when it was not yet too late for the traitor to cleanse his fault. Christ still stood near at hand in the garb of service, stooping to wash the earth stains from His disciples' feet. "Ye are not all clean." He had washed Judas' feet when He said it; but the cleansing of the feet was not enough for one

whose heart was still foul. Yet it was not then too late. The foulest might yet be bathed in the stream of the cleansing love of Christ. But the words of Christ wake no softening thoughts in the traitor's mind.

One more effort Christ will make. At the supper table He quotes the words, "He that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me" (John xiii. 18). Later still more explicitly, "One of you shall betray Me" (John xiii. 21). Even then it was not too late. The last step had not been taken by Judas. But, as with a man sliding down a steep place, the impetus of temptation was too strong. He takes the food from the hand of Christ. With treason in his heart, he does not hesitate to take that pledge of affection and loyalty. There is a treachery in the doing so; the Nemesis of base acts is further baseness. "After the sop Satan entered into him" (John xiii. 27). The crisis is passed at that moment. He will not turn back now. "That thou doest, do quickly" (John xiii. 27). "He went out straightway; and it was night." An hour later, his treason was an accomplished fact.

The inward story of Judas' life is a story of help refused and warning disregarded. The tender efforts of his Lord and Master to save him are put away.

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How far did Judas understand these efforts of Christ on his behalf? They were warnings to his spirit; the warnings were directed primarily, and at first exclusively, to the moral sense of the man. In the beginning there was no hint as of Christ saying, "I suspect you." On the contrary, the warnings were of that better sort which teach a man to suspect himself. Our Lord does not betray His suspicions of Judas; He wishes rather to reveal the traitor to himself. The detachment of a man from his sin must ever be a moral detachment—a detachment in which a man's will and conscience co-operate against the thing which is base and bad because it is base and bad. Christ did not wish Judas to be moved merely by motives of personal alarm, and under their influence alone to abandon his scheme. He sought to awaken the man's moral sense against himself. But later he brings to bear upon Judas the force of the less worthy motive. He gives the hints of coming betrayal. He wishes Judas to realise that the most carefully constructed of worldly-wise plans have always an element of weakness in them. No worldly policy can avail to receive a man into eternal habitations. But Judas, though warned, has dulled his soul by sin. The full significance of all that our Lord spoke does not reach him. Like many other schemers, he obstinately be-

lieves that his treachery is unknown. Only at the very last, it appears, does he realise that he may be suspected, and even to the moment of the treacherous kiss he hopes that it is other treachery than his own which is known to Christ.

Worldly wisdom outwits itself, as vaulting ambition overleaps itself and falls on the other side. The schemer imagines that he has covered the whole ground with his eye before he lays his plans, but there is always a blind spot in his field of vision. Sin blunts the conscience. It also dulls the mind. Judas was a peculator. He had enslaved himself by secret sin. He would not part with it. He put aside all that reminded him of duty. He created within himself a chamber with a closed door. Into that God might not come. He cannot admit the entrance of the higher good. How often is secret vice the real obstacle to the acceptance of the power of a larger life!

Indulging in a secret sin, and judging everything by the standard of his own interests, the sight of anything which conflicts with his interests exasperates Judas. This is the explanation of his astonishing and rash outburst of temper at Bethany. Although he veiled his real meaning by some words about the poor, yet the irritation which he displayed might have provoked suspicion. His speech was

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imprudent. It will be wise for him to put in motion the plans which will secure him his retreat. It may be that he has aroused suspicion. At any rate, the foolishly wasteful methods of these followers of Christ do not augur well for the success of a movement which should be conducted by a more prudent and thrifty policy. The people are alienated and the funds are wasted, which, judiciously administered, might have promoted the popularity of the Christ. This being so, it is high time that he should secure himself, and take those steps which will open to him retreat and good fortune should the Prophet of Galilee fail. He takes the step; he makes the bargain with the priests; he makes one fatal blunder—his greedy spirit compels him to accept the paltry and inadequate sum of money which was offered. Bitterly he will regret this act later. But crime has a habit of blundering. In the view of Judas, however, he has placed the priests under an obligation. Should his Galilean Master fail, he will have claims on Annas and Caiaphas and their company.

But it is not part of his policy to forsake the discipleship of Christ. It is still possible that Christ may declare Himself with invincible might, and seize in some unexpected way the crown which He seems to have refused. Judas, therefore, rejoins

the disciples, and keeps his place, hoping that as yet no suspicion has lighted on him. It would be hard, should the cause of Jesus Christ win in the conflict, that Judas should lose the stake he had played for and which he had gone so far to secure. He takes his place with the rest of the disciples. The words of Christ fall on a mind preoccupied with selfish schemes and with worldly hopes and fears. The sense of his treachery moves him but little. His mind is filled with the thought of the artful plan which he has devised. He will keep up the appearance of friendliness and loyalty to the last. Yes, even though it involves the crowning baseness of the hypocrite kiss. "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke xxii. 48). The words are spoken beneath the trees and in the darkness, illumined by the waving light of torch and lamp. Judas cannot doubt now that his treason is known. And yet, these other words, "Friend, do that for which thou art come" (Matt. xxvi. 50); what might they mean? What might they not? His Master calls him friend, and seemingly acquiesces in what has been done. Is He about to work some startling wonder? He has but a moment since sent forth some mysterious power; and the startled band of men and officers have shrunk to the ground (John xviii. 6). Can it be that his

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Master accepts the situation, and sees in it an opportunity for some splendid manifestation of power? Will victory dawn out of the hour of disaster? And if so, may not he, Judas, who devised this thing, yet be reckoned as an instrument of the triumph?

But his fellow disciples have fallen away from his side. He makes his way to the city. All illusions are soon at an end. His Master is condemned. All worldly hopes in that direction have disappeared.

He has, however, the other side to depend on. He will be honoured as the means of what the priestly party will consider a national triumph. He has been a fool to take that money. Under the circumstances he could have claimed some worthier reward, and even now he may claim something. He visits the priests, and, with an affectation of misgiving, expresses doubts concerning his own action. Does he think that they will pamper and coax him, laugh at his misgivings, and belaud him as a patriot who has deserved well of the powers that be? He is quickly undeceived. In the eyes of the priests he is a paid spy, and nothing more. Whatever has been done is his affair; he has been paid for it, and that is enough.

The scales fall from his eyes now. His dreams have been delusions. He has sacrificed place,

credit, character, friends, and for what? Some greater profit might well have been his, considering the risks he had run and the way he had squeezed his conscience to his work; but thirty pieces of silver—of what possible use are these to him? If this is all that he can win by his treachery, it was better for him before than now. This paltry sum of money is useless. He flings down the price of blood. He goes out alone.

He now must needs face facts. He is alone indeed. He has played a game, and by his calculation he stood to win either way, but he has lost. He has no way to turn.

He cannot approach his former comrades. The stain of his Master's blood is on his hands. He cannot go back to the priests, who have treated him as a paid informer. He thought that his skill had kept one door open to himself; but both doors are closed upon him.

"What shall I do? I cannot dig: to beg I am ashamed." Did the words come back to him now that his clever device had ended so disastrously? Did he now see that the habitations of worldly men were cruel? Did he now feel that he had closed upon himself the door of the eternal habitations? Did he see that worldly policy, however much it may be commended, is scorned in heaven? Did the

glimpse of the heavens from which he had thrust himself seem now for the first time to reveal a radiance and beauty he never recognised before ? Was that which now, by his own action, seemed unattainable, perceived at last to be most desirable ? Does it dawn upon his mind now that there is a nobler victory in patience and weakness, even when it suffers, than in hard and unscrupulous triumph ? Does he now perceive the outline of that spiritual kingdom which he would have none of ? Does that spiritual kingdom seem to his alienated spirit to be a land very far off when now at length he begins to guess at the beauty of its King ?

Is it too late for recovery ? It is the fate of those who play with their consciences that they diminish the reserve moral forces of their nature. We need not only moral power for the ordinary temptations of daily life ; we need reserves of moral strength for the hours of exceptional trial. The habit of moral integrity and spiritual exercise provides these reserves. Those who possess them may stumble but they will not fall ; or if they fall, they may arise, because they have not let go of the hand of heaven ; and the eternal God is their portion.

But with Judas it was otherwise. He had lived a life which circled round self ; self-interest, self-advancement, self-satisfaction were its objects. Self

was its fatal centre. No moral accumulation had been his ; the store of moral strength had been long since exhausted. Struck down by the heavy blow of disappointment, failure, disaster, he realised now the measureless spiritual distance which he had placed between himself and his Lord. He had no moral force of recovery. There was no particle of spiritual resiliency left in his nature. In the midst of the strange and awful collapse of his hopes and plans, and of the realisation of the bright heaven from which he had fallen, his only comrade was the dry terror of his heart. He was as a man placed upon a thin strip of coast, hemmed in behind by hard, unscaleable rocks, and fronting the inexorable waves of the incoming tide. He had no power to take up life again by repentance, and to seek to undo the past by earnest and humble work for others. He could not dig ; to beg he was ashamed. There seemed nothing for it but to lay down that life which he had not the moral earnestness to value nor the moral courage to face.

He departed and went and hanged himself.

Is the picture of Judas an unusual one ? Is it only once in a century or a millennium that such a character presents itself ? A man possessed of sagacity and shrewdness learns to balance probabilities

of success and to ignore the consideration of principle. Enthusiasm for right is inconvenient. Fidelity to conviction, to truth, to honour, interferes sadly with his worldly prospects. Conscience is a troublesome fellow voyager. It is better that it should be put overboard. The only purpose of life is success. Is the picture far to seek? Yet, wherever such men are to be found, they are the incipient Iscariots of the world. Nay, such are already traitors at heart—traitors to themselves, to mankind, and to God. It is not, alas! uncommon for a man to jeopardise the growth of his moral nature for the sake of his worldly interests, nor yet for a man to disencumber himself of his moral convictions for the sake of his own advancement. The rottenness of such methods is not perceived at first, but when the crisis comes the evil foundations of such a life are discovered. Absorbing devotion to self disintegrates the character. In the flood time of temptation it goes to pieces. Absorbing devotion to the other One than self, to Him who alone is the true centre of life, consolidates, strengthens, invigorates the character. Day by day those so devoted grow to firmer mould and nobler stature. They are in Christ's hands, and none can pluck them thence. They fall not; they are founded on a rock. Moral

THE SON OF MAN AMONG THE SONS OF MEN

power is theirs, for they are joined in love to Him of Whom is all power in heaven and in earth. Such can go their way in peace till the end be ; for they shall rest and stand in their lot at the end of the days.

SIMON PETER

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?"

JOHN xxi. 15

SIMON PETER

MEN'S lives may be divided into two seasons, the season of preparation and the season of achievement. Achievement is the fruit of preparation; preparation is the explanation of achievement. It is interesting at times to leave out of sight the season of preparation, and to forget a man's earlier struggles and his failures, that we may contemplate him as a successful influence in the season of achievement. Then he is simply a force, and for the moment an unexplained force, achieving something great and worthy. If we allow ourselves this privilege with Simon Peter, we may view him in his mature and active life as the earliest pioneer of the faith of Christ among his countrymen. He is a type of the living force which an honest man imbued with deep convictions can exercise in a good cause. His is that ardent temperament, that unwavering loyalty of purpose, that ready utterance which fit him to become a leader among men. He speaks,

and his words are aglow with the pure fervour of single-minded conviction; he speaks to men, and his tones thrill with that persuasive power which betokens the wish to win men's hearts. He acts, and his actions exhibit kindness, vigour, and courage. He takes up his pen and writes, and his words are full of peace and comfort. He shows that he can realise the difficulties of men; he feels for their trials; he points out their privileges and opportunities; he is ambitious for them; he desires their progress, and he never forgets the great unseen but everlasting presence of Him who is worthiest of love, and always near, even when hidden from the eyes of men.

Whether we listen to Simon Peter on the day of Pentecost, or hear him speaking to the men of the Sanhedrim, or read the glowing words of his Epistle, we feel that he is a man who is loyally, simply, and tenderly doing his duty with set purpose of heart, and in unquestioning dependence upon his Lord. There is nothing artificial or insincere; there is nothing conventional; he speaks as he feels; he writes according to the honest convictions of his heart; there is no self-consciousness in his attitude; there is no dictatorial assumption; he seeks to win men and to encourage them, but only by the legitimate and acknowledged means of moral influence. He

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is a man of capacity and force, but his powers are under the dominion of his moral aspirations, not of his personal ambitions; he is a simple, guileless, sincere, tender, true-hearted man, filled with an enthusiasm for the cause of his Master which inspires his courage, and burns for utterance by voice or pen.

We may take him as an example in speech, in action, and in teaching.

In speech he gives us a pattern in his sermon on the day of Pentecost. In this sermon, or address, St. Peter shows a ready grasp of the situation. He turns the objection of the mockers into an argument. Exaltation may spring from spiritual causes; elevation of soul is not always the result of physical indulgence. The prophets of the past foretold of a time in which men would be filled with the Spirit. The spirit which animated the disciples at that moment was the spirit of Christ—of Christ whose death lay at the doors of the Jews—for they had slain Him. The Apostle speaks with honest directness. He does not hesitate to speak of the wicked hands which wrought his Master's death. But he has an earnest wish to win his hearers. He calls them to repentance, and seeks to persuade them that the love of God is greater than the sin of man.

In conduct he is the same simple and courageous

man as he is in speech. When he stands before the Sanhedrim he does not flinch. He will not change his conduct through fear. "We cannot but speak the things we have heard and seen."

From these we may turn to his Epistle. He is simple and devout—earnest, but free from arrogance. His Master is dear to him. He is the preciousness. (1 Peter ii. 7). He is the one "whom having not seen" yet the disciples may love (1 Peter ii. 8). Well-doing is the best answer to ignorant criticism (1 Peter ii. 15). All are to be honoured (ch. ii. 17). All should use their gifts for good (ch. iv. 10). Suffering and reproach may be blessed things (ch. iv. 14). The minister of Christ is not to lord it over God's heritage, but to be an ensample to the flock (ch. v. 3).

We can feel the disciplined and chastened spirit of the man who writes these precepts. We feel that he is strong-hearted and self-vigilant, tender and devout.

This is the picture we get of the Apostle. He has his hours of weakness, when his weakness lends an air of insincerity to his conduct (Gal. ii.), but on the whole the picture is of an earnest, single-minded, loving, and reverent man, possessed of great capacity for evoking affection and for winning wide influence over his fellows.

But he has not grown to this without education. This is what he has been made through the tender and unsleeping discipline of love. We turn from the completed picture to the season of preparation.

To understand the education, we must begin with some knowledge of the person who is to be educated. We must know what manner of man Simon Peter was. His general character is easy to understand. His is not one of those complex and intricate characters which startle us with some unexpected development. On the contrary, he is one of those obvious natures which express themselves completely at first. He is intelligible; he is never veiled in artificialism; he is a man who does not find it difficult to be himself. And what is this self? It is described in one word by our Lord Himself. "Thou art Kephas"—a stone. There was a native strength, energy, and practical effectiveness about him. This gave him directness of purpose, and promptness to suggest and to do. He was not betrayed by the speculative habit which withdraws some men from active life; philosophical moods were comparatively unknown to his nature. The practical instincts of the heart and life held an uppermost place in his mind. He was the man of action more than the man of thought, impetuous, not reflective, quick at decision, impatient of hesita-

tion, ardent, eager, enthusiastic. He possessed the straight decisiveness and the warmth needful for those who are to be leaders of men.

This character manifests itself in the gospel story. His readiness to speak the thing uppermost in his mind is constantly displayed. If he thinks a suggestion mistaken, even if it be from his Master's lips, he must speak. "We have toiled all the night and have taken nothing," is the language in which he expresses his doubt of the success of Christ's command. He experiences no doubt in the presence of deep and significant questions. "Whom say ye that I am?" asks our Lord. Simon Peter has no hesitation in his reply—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He is as confident as to what ought to befall his Master as he is about His mission. No cross and humiliation must be His, "That be far from Thee." He has no doubt of the life-help which the words of Christ can give, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast words of eternal life." He is sure about his own action and his own expectations: "We have left all and have followed Thee, what shall we have therefore?" As the crisis draws near he is ready for action—"Lord, behold here are two swords."

If he is ready to speak, he is also foremost to act. He has no doubt that his Master will pay the

tribute, and, on being asked, he immediately goes off to obtain it. When he sees his Master on the water, he is earnestly wishful to be at His side, and he is the only one who thinks of stepping out upon the stormy deep. In the dark night hour of the betrayal and arrest, he is the only one who makes any effort at resistance. It is his sword which leaps from the scabbard and descends on the head of Malchus. In the dim light of morning, when the shadowy figure appeared upon the lake shore, and John whispered, "It is the Lord," Peter, with the bitter memory of his denial in his mind, is eager to be doing something; he cannot endure to be passive at any time, least of all when his heart is torn with memories of his baseness and his fall; so he leaps into the sea, and bestirs himself in dragging the great net to land.

In all these scenes we gain an insight into Simon Peter's character. We see him eager, active, self-confident; capable of great effort and great service, quick and responsive in sympathy, forward to do and to speak, thoughtless and impatient, but of transparent simplicity and sincerity.

These were some of the features of his temperament. What were the influences which were at work in the development of his character? What were the surroundings of this man?

He was a Jew. Around him were scenes and influences appealing to the warm blood of his race, which flowed in his veins with a fuller and freer course than in those of most of his fellow-countrymen. To him Jerusalem was the loved city of God, the joy of the whole earth. The hope of the future, for Israel and for the world, lay in her. The caravans which at festival times wound in and out among the hills, making white sinuous streaks across the green plains as they converged towards the holy city, were omens of a greatness and a glory which would draw the Gentiles to her light and kings to the brightness of her coming day of triumph. The laws and customs of his people had for him a sacred authority. To all he was ready to render an unquestioning adhesion. He cannot bear the suggestion that his Master would not pay the synagogue or temple due. No new principle, no original reflections, have as yet disquieted his mind on these matters. The laws and usages of his race and nation are sacred and above challenge.

There were many, no doubt, in Judæa who shared these convictions of the stability and glory of the race; but with the bulk of the people the hope of Israel was a conventional rather than a devout expectation of the long hoped-for deliverer. There were some, however, who cherished faith in what

they felt to be a divine promise. There were those who looked for redemption in Israel. The old things seemed to them to have grown old ; the faith and piety about them appeared hollow and unreal ; the nation had reached that epoch in which help and strength could come from heaven alone. It seemed to them that the period in which they lived was like a season of prolonged drought. The springs of activity and hope were running low. Men looked in vain for the signs of deliverance. The devout turned their eyes to heaven ; for God would not fail. They looked up to the hills from whence surely would come their help. Among these were people like Zechariah and Elizabeth, Anna and Simeon ; they were the waiting ones. And Simon Peter belonged to this class of devout and hopeful souls. The language in which Andrew tells of his meeting with our Lord seems to suggest this ; he speaks as though the expectation of the messenger and Messiah of God had been a living expectation with his brother and himself, "We have found the Messiah, the anointed," he says ; and his words sound like the joyful realisation of a constant and recognised hope. The thing for which they had been yearning seemed to be near accomplishment. The noble discontent and patient trust which had been theirs so long was on the point of meeting its reward. Their hearts,

dissatisfied with things as they were, had been crying out for one who would come to earth with heaven's reconciling power. They had looked for the Christ; and this expectation must have exercised influence over Simon Peter's disposition. It is not for nothing that men are called upon to hope and wait patiently for the Lord. Their spirits are thus trained to endurance and confidence; reliance on the wisdom and faithfulness of God grows into a devout and settled habit of mind in those who welcome and endure this discipline of God. Such a discipline of waiting was given to Simon Peter.

But encouragements also were given to the waiting ones. There were lights which shone on the darkness of those who were waiting for the coming of Christ. Chiefly there was that bright and shining light which shone from the Baptist. His coming was like a lamp that burneth; the strong rays fell on the darkness of men's lives and put them to shame; his rebukes shook the hearts of many. But the same words which roused shame and repentance brought hope and comfort. He was a light of comfort to those who looked for the Messiah. He kept alive their hope with his confident message; "There cometh one after me." Thus in Simon Peter's life, before he came under the guiding and educating care of our Lord, various influences

had been at work. National prejudices and hopes, devout expectations, and the stimulating energy of the Baptist's teaching, had affected him and left their mark upon his character.

We can, though with hesitation, partly estimate the result of these influences. The hopes which an ardent nature like Simon Peter's cherished would be strengthened; the form of those hopes would take shape under the guidance of popular expectation; the dream of the material splendours which would accompany the Messiah's coming would be set in clearer form and would grow in vividness; at the same time the hopes of a man, who had allowed devout feelings to have place in his thoughts and expectations, and who had been stirred by the robust ethical power of John the Baptist's teaching, would not be wholly given up to the non-moral materialism which was the chief element in the visions of many in Israel. The kingdom on which Simon Peter set his hopes was, doubtless, a material kingdom, but it was one in which right and truth were to rule. The genuine spiritual earnestness of his nature would save him from the grosser and more worldly conceptions of the Messiah's kingdom which prevailed in some quarters. But at the same time, the beautiful and purely spiritual kingdom of Christ was as yet far away from Simon Peter's thoughts.

We have tried to form some idea of the raw material with which our Lord had to deal when He commenced the training of Simon Peter. We have seen that the disciple was a man by natural disposition eager, prompt, practical, impatient of doubt or delay, quick to speak and quick to act, with a ready sensitiveness to the influences of the moment; yet with certain clear notions and strong convictions. He was ardently Jewish, and intense in his national prejudices. He brought to Christ a strong, capable nature, ardent, self-confident, and uninstructed. What did our Lord do for him? Our Lord gave him the education of instruction, discipline, experience, and example.

There was a gradual and enlarging instruction. This instruction was the self-unfolding of the divine Lord to His servant. From stage to stage there was unfolded to him the greatness and glory of the Master.

It is as the Messiah that Simon Peter first sees our Lord. Christ was more than Messiah, and certainly much more than the limited, worldly Messiah conceived of by the men of his day; but though He was more, yet it is as the Messiah that He is first made known to Simon Peter. The Messianic notion was uppermost in the people's mind; this was the conception of His work which they would most

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readily apprehend. The most familiar form was the best for the first revelation. The larger and more unfamiliar aspects might be reached later ; but the simplest thoughts must come first. But it was not long before an enlarged view was to be revealed to the disciples. The Messiah was to be King of Israel, ruling on the throne of David ; but the conception formed respecting the character of his sovereignty was necessarily limited ; however vast might be the empire which the Messiah would rule, it was, in their expectations, to be an empire in which the sovereignty was to be like the sovereignty of other monarchs—such as Solomon.

But there is a kingdom of moral ascendancy which is greater than any earthly kingdom. This was to be revealed to Simon Peter ; and so by the lake-side, after the long and dispiriting night of failure, our Lord sends a message to Peter's heart. The practical experience of the fisherman is found to be at fault ; but at the bidding of Christ the net brings up abundance of fish. Simon Peter feels himself in the presence of one whose authority is irresistible, because it is moral. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord !" is his cry. It is at this moment that our Lord discloses something of the moral mission upon which His disciples are to be sent. "Fear not ; from henceforth thou shalt

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catch men." To the disciples at that time our Lord became the Lord of the harvest. Duty was in the servant's hand; results were in the hands of his Lord. Strange duties might be assigned to the servant; the disciple was to let down other nets in other seas; but however unpromising the prospect, the duty was laid upon him by one who was Lord of the fruits of every toil. When at His word they let down the net they enclosed a great multitude of fishes. In this incident Christ unfolds Himself to His disciples as Lord of their lives and of their lives' mission. He shows that their mission will be among men whom they are to seek to win. He gives them the glimpse of a kingdom which is moral rather than material; and at the same time He shows Himself as Lord of their lives.

There was a further revelation. The disciples are on the sea; the time is night; and the night is full of storm. They vainly ply the labouring oar. They make no progress. The wind is contrary. There in the darkness they descry the shadowy outline of a form moving on the waters. They are afraid. Some strange spirit walks the deep. It is an omen of ill. But when their cry of terror is raised, the answering voice assures them that all is well. "It is I; be not afraid." It is their Lord revealing Himself to them as Lord of the seas, and as the

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ever-present help in trouble. Simon Peter shows his courageous and affectionate disposition. Where his Master is, there he would fain be also. "If it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the water." But his faith is not equal to his ardour. The hissing waves made him afraid, and he began to sink. The outstretched hand of his Lord saved him. Christ afterwards said to His disciples, "Without Me ye can do nothing." But this incident on the sea had taught the same lesson. Till He came they had made but little progress. When He entered the ship they easily reached the farther shore. When Simon Peter thought of the difficulties, and shrank from the uplifted and angry waters he began to sink. When his hand grasped his Lord's hand he was safe. Christ thus reveals Himself as all in all to His servants. He approves the motive of Simon Peter, but He lets him feel that alone he is weak. There is a warning against self-confidence, even at the moment when Christ is showing His disciples that He is with them always. He teaches the disciple his weakness; and He reveals Himself as Lord of power.

There was yet a higher revelation. On the Mount of Transfiguration the divine voice is heard, and the splendour of Christ's inner glory is seen. It is the revelation of the divine, true glory ; and that glory

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not a glory of earthly character. Earthly glory meant to the disciples conquest and victory, in which their foes were vanquished, while they were exalted to honour. Heavenly glory meant the glory of a love which gave and suffered. When, therefore, the disciples had seen His glory on the mountain-top, Jesus began to speak to them of that humiliation and death in which the glory and victory of love were to be accomplished. But here they could not follow Him. Simon Peter even went so far as to chide his Master for imagining such things. The divergence of spirit and principle between the Master and His disciples was seen. But the revelation had been made, and though they could not understand it then, they had been given a glimpse into the excellent glory; and they had been prepared for that manifestation of the sacrificing love of Christ which was to follow.

Thus in these three incidents Christ revealed Himself to Simon Peter as Lord of life, and Lord of power, and Lord of love.

Christ educated His servant.

There was another factor which was needful in Simon Peter's training. It was that factor which holds a place in the education of most. Mere knowledge does not educate. Even the kindest and wisest teachers cannot do all. The best pupil is handed

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over sooner or later to the education of experience. Few indeed learn otherwise ; and even Jesus Christ must leave time and facts to teach Peter what Peter would not learn from Him. Peter was one who pre-eminently needed, nay, we might almost say courted, the education of experience. His self-confidence could not be checked or banished by example or remonstrance. The scourge of bitter failure was needed to drive it out.

It is not well that we should exaggerate the baseness of Simon Peter's fall. He was guilty, but there were what might be called extenuating circumstances.

There was the painfulness of disenchantment. He and the rest obstinately clung to their first notions. Christ was Messiah ; He was going to be King. It is true that the Apostle received ideas and teaching which contradicted these material conceptions ; but it is a fact that men can hold at one and the same time the most contradictory ideas. It takes time to assimilate new thoughts and to discard the old incongruous ideas. It was so with Simon Peter. He had not got rid of his temporal notions, even when he had partly embraced the spiritual teaching of Christ. And so when his Master was taken, he saw what looked like a complete collapse of His power. The wonderful works which had been wrought by

the lake-side and among the cities of the north, are not repeated by his Master at that supreme hour. The disciple sees his Master led away, bound and unresisting.

And this apparent collapse of his Lord's power comes at an hour when he is not fitted to bear it. His physical and mental powers have been exposed to long and anxious strain. There had been the excitement of the previous evening. He had been present at that wonderful last supper. He had heard Christ's strange and ominous words. Sorrow had filled his heart. The exciting evening had been followed by the night vigil, when he had tried to watch and had vainly fought with a sleep which nervous strain had made well-nigh irresistible. All this had been followed by the startling and fatal invasion of their quiet sanctuary. Upon the stillness of the garden, when he was hardly yet awake, there had come the clamour of the band of men and officers. The flashing of the lamps surprised his weary eyes. Then had ensued the wild and reckless effort with the sword; and before he could realise what had happened, his Master was gone, and all the dreams of his life had vanished.

Crushed in spirit and weary in frame, he followed to the high priest's house. In that unfamiliar place, he soon was made to feel what an insignificant and

inferior personage he was. His provincial accent was ridiculed ; he was badgered with questions, and dragged into an unwelcome prominence. And at last the tired and bewildered and terrified spirit gave way, and Peter denied his Lord.

But all these circumstances will not get rid of the guilt. The baseness of the denial is clear enough. Simon Peter quickly realised it. One look from his Lord revealed to him his shame. When he thought thereon, he wept ; for then he saw the patience and tenderness of Christ's teaching, and his own self-will and self-confidence. He could then realise how explicit had been Christ's warnings, and how blind his own self-confidence had made him. Then the baseness, which had led him to desert a cause, to forsake a friend, and to deny his Lord, was seen in its true light. He wept. We can understand the agony which was his during the dark days and hours of Christ's entombment. That time was like a death-time to Simon Peter ; but it was to be followed by a time of new life. No man more truly died and rose again with Christ than did Simon Peter. Those lonely hours were the death of his old, self-confident spirit. The Resurrection morning brought fresh life to the crushed, sin-stained, and sorrowing heart of the fallen disciple. Peter is indeed the same active, eager man as before. Characteristically he is not

content with casting a reverent glance into the empty sepulchre ; he goes in and examines everything. At the sea-shore, when Christ appears, he cannot rest. Perhaps the nervous dread of meeting his Lord compels him to be doing something ; but it is a touch of his old energy which makes him leap into the water and strive to drag the net to land. He is the same man. But there is a difference. The old self-vaunting, self-assertive habit has gone. He has learned a wholesome self-distrust. He will not deny his love to his Lord, but he throws himself upon his Lord. "Lord ! Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Thus Simon Peter is restored ; but it is the tender love of Christ which restores him. Experience has taught him a better lesson. He has been compelled to face his own weakness in the discovery of the baseness to which it had led him. But experience, while it could teach through his weakness, could not revive his heart or restore him to life's work. He has learned not to rely upon himself ; experience could teach him thus far ; but, even so, he might have fallen into doubtful, hesitating ways, and as the result he might have become a weak and vacillating man. But behind the teaching of experience stood Christ. His eyes of love were on His disciple. His tenderness did not fail. He gave the helping hand

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which lifted Peter out of the deep into which he was sinking. He forgave. He cheered him with that forgiveness which sent him out into the world a softened and humbled man. He inspired him with that love which made him a courageous, ardent disciple, capable of great devotion. He filled him with living and patient tenderness that he might be a helper of the weak, and a friend of the fallen.

THOMAS

"Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed"

JOHN XX. 29

THOMAS,

THOMAS belonged to that class of men whose temperaments are described as despondent. No man probably is responsible for his temperament; for temperament, as I understand it, is a convenient phrase to describe those qualities and dispositions which belong to him from birth.

But though a man is not responsible for his temperament, he can be held responsible for his use and management of it. In practical life, we do not blame the lad who is dull because of his dulness, though, inconsistently enough, we are found praising a clever lad for his cleverness. But whatever may be thought of this inconsistency, there is a general consensus of judgment established by the good sense of mankind, that blame and praise must be allotted on the score of the use or the misuse which men make of their capacities. After all, the clever boy should be praised if he make good use of his abilities, not because he has good abilities to use; and our

praise of the dull boy in the same way should be bestowed upon him for the effort he makes to employ his dull wits well. Temperament which comes to us from our ancestors appears to me to stand on the same footing as original brain power. We blame the despondent man, not because he inherited a despondent temperament, but because he gives way to it. We view the sanguine man in the same way. We may justly blame him when he suffers himself to be carried away by his temperament. Life indeed presents us with sad illustrations of these temperaments. It is bitterly painful to be the possessor of a despondent temperament. To such a man the smile of hope is almost a stranger. He lives under cloudy skies; he anticipates evil; he is prepared for failure. This is a painful inheritance for any man. We may feel sympathy for the man whose spirit is shadowed by such a disposition. But it is in the man's power to modify the influence of such a temperament. He may allow the despondent temperament to render him moody and distrustful: he may so yield himself to it that his activity is paralysed, and he sinks into an indolent and despairing apathy. We blame him for allowing his temperament to get the better of his reason and so arrest the resolution of his will.

The sanguine temperament is exposed to opposite

temptations. The man of despondent temperament is a pain to himself. The man of sanguine temperament is more often a pain to his neighbours. With him hope ever smiles, and the smiles of hope are too often taken as the assurances of sound judgment and reasonable expectation. All is sure to be well. He may venture upon this change; he may allow this enlargement of expenditure beyond the actual margin of his income: the hands of the future carry their ample store for him. Does he not know it well? He has already seen the auspicious light on fortune's face. But his hopes deceive him. The disaster falls. Others are involved in the ruin which results from these hopeful expectations. We do not rebuke his hopefulness. It probably would be useless; for the sanguine man is usually incorrigible. His very hopefulness makes him a more hopeless subject to deal with than the despondent man. Cynics will say, It is so, because his vice of temperament works more disastrously for others than himself. Others will be led to think that there is a sweet significance in the truth that hope is more easily implanted in men's hearts than prudence. But all will unite in feeling that the blame lies not with the sanguine temperament, but with the man who allows his reason and his judgment to be misled by his temperament. For reason and experience are

designed to be wholesome checks upon our temperament in one direction or another ; and the balance of life's experience is so nice between sorrow and joy that the advantage to be won by either of these temperaments can be but small. And the value of life is seen in this, that it seconds and supports reason in her efforts to restrain those impulses which arise out of temperament. It is this power of restraining the suggestions of temperament which constitutes one element in manhood. Reason goes forth even in the domain of the wondrous physical organisation in which we are enclosed, and claims that we shall not be betrayed by the morbid or hopeful dispositions which are at work within us, but that we shall assume an ascendancy over these qualities and live as those who can use and manage them under the direction of that which is higher, even our conscience. The blame then is not rightly directed against a man because he possesses this temperament or that ; but because he yields to those impulses which result from his temperament.

In such a submission lay the initial fault of Thomas. His was, as we have said, a despondent nature ; and, if I mistake not, there are indications in the Gospels of the way in which he yielded to the impulses and suggestions of his temperament. Herein

lay the blame; and herein the upgrowth of that which led to his rebuke.

He allowed his temperament to master his judgment. He was naturally gloomy, as we should say. He was capable of strong and constant affection, but his very love was coloured by the sombre hues of his despondency. We get a glimpse of this in the incidents connected with the raising of Lazarus. Our Lord announces his intention of going to Judæa. The time has come for Him to go with comfort and life to the side of the sorrowing sisters at Bethany. When He speaks of His intention, the ready fears of His followers awake, and they venture on the remonstrance, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee; and goest Thou thither again?" In their view He is imperilling His life; and they venture to point out the undoubted risk which must attend the proposed journey. But Thomas goes far beyond his brother disciples. He breaks in with the view that it is useless to expostulate, and that of course all will turn out ill. In his view the journey is rash and imprudent—that must be clear to all; it is certain to end in disaster; some fatal doom will overtake them all. "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." (John xi. 16.) Of that he feels no doubt. It is not the language of courage facing risk, but of sullen despair anticipating the

worst. He has no eye for the hopeful side of matters. He can only see the worst, and regard the worst as certain. Calmer judgment might have considered that in all risk there is a chance of escape; reflection might have led him to think that his Master's action was probably not wholly unreasonable: but thoughts like these were allowed no place in a mind clouded already with the dark suggestions of his despondent temperament.

The incident illustrates the ascendancy which the temperament is often allowed to exercise over the judgment. Just as the sanguine temperament has an eye only for the happy chance, so the despondent has no eye but for the mischance. The same tyranny of temperament which leads the sanguine man who has but £100 a year to live as though he had a £1000, leads the despondent man to be the victim of myriad misgivings, and to allow himself no joy in even the assured fruits of his toil. The lion is always in the road. He fears to venture anything; and if the possibilities of heroism do not wither within him, the charm of heroism is lost, because courage is deprived of cheerfulness and sacrifice of its joy. If he goes to the fray, it is with downcast eye and moody visage. The victim of his temperament, he acts like a fettered man. The joyousness of free action is not his. He meets danger as a

slave driven to battle ; his is not the lordly soul, which gains dignity and self-mastery in the hour of peril, and whose quick eye detects the opportunity of success in the midst of danger. It is thus that the temperament may betray the judgment and darken the intelligence. This was the fault which the utterance of Thomas betrayed.

But later he went beyond this ; for he allowed his temperament to master his faith in good.

This may not be so clear ; but it emerges, I think, in his question to our Lord recorded by St. John (xiv. v.). When our Lord comforted His disciples respecting His departure, and assured them of His constant remembrance of them and of the continuousness of His work on their behalf, He spoke of the change which was coming as nothing strange. He wished to let them feel that there were no sudden breaks in His life and communion with them ; for that which is strange startles and affrights men. He spoke of all, therefore, as familiar. "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." On this Thomas started a question, which was in reality an argument. "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way ?"

The question involves an argument ; and at first sight the argument seems good and sound. Thomas, it will be said, has not here allowed his reason to be

betrayed by his temperament ; for the question is surely most pertinent and the reasoning most sound. It is impossible to tell what the way is when we do not know the destination. It seems good reasoning to say the road cannot be known till the place which it is desired to reach is determined. We determine our route after we have determined our destination, and not before.

The reasoning is sound in things physical. I take leave to doubt its soundness in things moral and spiritual. In the order of things physical, it is true. We must know our port before we can determine the course to be sailed. But in the higher realms of life, the argument is not sound. In regions where we walk by sight, we must have a clear view of our destination before we can know our route. In regions where we walk by faith the path is the first thing. Whither it leads is secondary. In matters of morals this is true. A man has no hesitation as to the path which he must choose when one path is the path of honour and the alternative is the path of dishonour. In such affairs the man chooses the path, and never pauses to ask where it leads. It is often of the very essence of his own honour that he should choose it, not knowing whither it goes, or whether he who treads it will be landed in sorrow or joy, in poverty or wealth. Indeed, in all the loftier

choices of the soul, the destination lies beyond the clouds.

The spirit of enterprise, which leads to the discovery of some new land or some beneficial truth, asks not to see the goal before it sets out. Those whose names are enrolled in the annals of fame, and have wrought great things for the world, have often marched along a darkened way, content with groping forward towards that goal which they have only been able to picture in vision and to pursue in faith. The reformer in social, political, or religious matters has seldom been able to forecast whither his imperious passion for good is leading him. His language is : " Whatever happens, wherever this step may lead me, this wrong, this intolerable wrong, which bows down the backs of men, and which enslaves their hearts or paralyses their consciences, must be swept away. I see to-day the path. It is the path of righteousness ; it must be followed. I cannot forecast what shall be on the morrow, and where to day's path may bring me. I know only to-day's duty. I care not what the morrow may disclose, if only to-day's duty be loyally and fitly done." The man who feels thus finds his thoughts fitly fashioned in the poet's words, so dear to General Gordon :

" I go to prove my soul !
I see my way as birds their trackless way ;

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I shall arrive: what time, what circuit first
I ask not ; but unless God send His hail
Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow
In some time, His good time, I shall arrive,
He guides me and the birds. In His good time."

Of this metal are the men who, like the early hero of faith, went out not knowing whither they went. They are those who have been carried forward by achievements greater than their highest dreams, precisely because they reckoned only with right and duty, and not at all with success. "A man never goes so high as when he knows not where he is going," said Cromwell, and such souls have found that the loftiness of their flight has borne some proportion to the disinterestedness of their aims. They saw the way ; they followed it.

There are, therefore, some matters in which we may know the road, but we may not know whither we go.

And in matters spiritual this must largely be the case. The challenge of Christ to men is a challenge to take the way, and to follow Him, though the final goal is obscured in gloom.

If we turn to the incident and conversation we shall find that our Lord takes for granted this principle. "We know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way ?" argues the disciple. In reply

Christ says nothing of the goal in the sense in which Thomas thought of it. He draws attention not to the destination but to the path. "I am the way," He says. Since He had appeared He was the only way to men. The moral beauty and spiritual loveliness which He had shown, the attraction which He Himself was, the beautiful life which He lived, these revealed the way. Once these were seen and understood, there was no other way left to man. Therefore He said to all, "I am the way ;" just as He said at another time, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." Sin was darkness, and a darkness in which men stumbled. Christ was light, and whoso walked in Him would find no occasion of stumbling.

This being the case, was it so needful to think of the goal to which He led them? Was not the finding of the road enough? Did not the way seem so clear that there could be no hesitation about following it? Was it not so right a way that, to any who had faith in goodness at all, it must be a matter of conviction that the end must be right also? What need to ask whither it led, or what the goal? Such a path must lead to God—the eternal and unfailing God. No other thought was needed—no picture of heaven, no attraction of reward, no assurance of personal joy. What heaven was, or where, or how

its enjoyments could be realised, were questions outside the necessity of the soul who saw the way to the divine presence. Therefore our Lord says : "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." I am the way—God is the goal. Nothing else is needed, no attractions of ease, or place, or scene.

To the soul which desires God, the vision of the way which is clearly right should be enough. To the disciple the revelation of Christ carried conviction. Before such an one the way lay open. Whatever else was doubtful this was sure. In this way he must walk. Nay, to him who understood the meaning of what he saw, to see that way of life was a vision of the Eternal. He who realised the beauty of that human life saw in it the divine which his soul had longed for. He who saw Christ saw the manifestation of that which carried its own revelation and its own assurance of heavenly things. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Under these circumstances to ask to see the end and the goal before setting out upon the road was to convict himself of having lost faith in supreme and overruling goodness. For how could one who had seen the goodness manifest doubt that here lay the way which must be walked in ? Yet this is just what Thomas had allowed himself to do when he advanced the argument, "We know not whither

Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" In the incident and discussion concerning the visit to Bethany he had suffered his judgment to be mastered by his temperament. But now he allows his temperament a further victory ; for he suffers the spirit of pessimism to argue away his faith in goodness.

His temperament betrayed him still further. Later, after our Lord's resurrection, his better nature suffered a further defeat. He allowed the thought of the material to triumph over the spiritual.

Are we surprised at this ? Is it very startling to find that, having allowed his gloomy disposition to master his judgment, and to dull his faith in goodness, he should reach a determination to believe only that which was established by the evidence of his senses ? "Except I see, except I feel, I will not believe." It is the mood which this resolution betrays that we should note. The question of evidence involved is not part of our thought now. We are tracing the influence of temperament ; and we find it landing a man in a determination not to believe except on conditions which he himself lays down. It is not the utterance of a reasonable demand for proof, but the sullen resolution of a man who orders his arguments at the bidding of his moods, rather than of his reflections. It is not the expression of a thoughtful doubt ; it is the ex-

pression of a spirit whose ethical activity has been lowered by the indulgence of gloomy forebodings. It is not nimbleness of wit or alacrity of faculty which speaks ; it is the tyranny of temperament. It is the utterance of one who has habituated himself to think that the best, and happiest, and purest aspirations and wishes, are always doomed to failure and disappointment—who deems that the brightest and fairest things, almost because they are bright and fair, are destined to perish.

Christ his Lord, so pure and true and loving, was one of those beautiful revelations which, of course, must fade away. He will not believe that He is alive for evermore, unless he can have tangible, material proof. "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of His nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." He is hard, mechanical, peremptory. Only material evidence can prove the everlastingness of that revelation of moral and spiritual beauty. Faith in the eternal goodness has almost ceased to be his heritage. Had he held to it he had been happier. Faith in the eternity of the truest and best would have saved him from the hardness of this gloomy and faithless resolution. Happy would it have been for him had he not succumbed to the influence of his own moody

disposition. Happy had he cherished trust in the final victory of that which was true and pure ; and in the eternal reality of Him who had revealed it to them. "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

These three incidents serve to illustrate the way in which temperament was allowed to make progress against judgment and ethical reasonableness and spiritual reality. The evil influence eats its way inward ; the progress is towards the lower plane of life. Hope, which is so often blamed as deceitful, is after all a sweet and reasonable thing. She often lives on to smile in the face of those who have doubted her glad prophecies of good. Our hopes may indeed fail us ; but it is no evidence of reasonableness to take up the position that things will always turn out ill, and that, just because hope's dreams are sweet, therefore they cannot ever come true. Of the two temperaments, the hopeful one conduces more to that cheerfulness which is the nurse of reason, than does the temperament of gloom. But the despondent nature may destroy more than this safeguard of reasonableness ; it may invalidate our best moral convictions, and leave the character at the mercy of a stiff moroseness which crushes the resiliency of our spiritual capacities. Slowly the change is wrought. Reason is invaded and fettered ;

moral power is enchained ; and a surly materialism of feeling settles over the whole nature. These were the perils which beset the character of Thomas.

Our Lord gave him his wish. The proof which the Apostle had demanded was supplied. He had said, "Except I see, except I touch." Christ says, "Reach hither thy hand." The evidence of sight and touch is given. If such proof can satisfy, he is satisfied abundantly. But can we not feel that there is a sense of loss at the very moment of such a gain? Yes, of course, he is satisfied. How can he be otherwise, when the very proof which he demanded is furnished, and when physical and material demonstration has been supplied? And yet how low and poor it all seems! This physical proof leaves upon us the sense of its inadequacy ; it provokes the consciousness that we have ignored something which is greater than aught that is physical. Somehow we feel that it was not this we meant, but more than this ; and that to have asked and insisted on this was to leave ourselves unsatisfied, and dishonoured by our very insistency.

The very fact that what he asked had been granted must, I think, have wrought a kind of shame in the heart of the Apostle. The shame that he had been so exacting towards One whom

he might well have trusted ; the shame which the realisation of the unworthiness of mere material evidence leaves behind ; the shame arising from the consciousness that, in making this demand, he had sunk below the higher level of the spiritual in his nature and life—must have filled his soul. Do we not catch the echo of it in his cry, “My Lord and my God” ? Do not the words convey the realisation of the higher as the true relationship between him and his Master ? He does not say, “It is Thou Thyself ; the same, the One in whose presence we ate and drank.” He does not exclaim concerning the unquestionable evidence which has been given him in the very presence of his Master ; he can only think of Him as Lord of his spirit, and the revelation of God to his soul. The bodily presence sinks out of the range of his mental vision at the very moment when the bodily evidence is given. It is with the realisation of his Lord and God that the Apostle’s mind is occupied. It is not of the wound-prints in hands and side that he thinks ; it is of Him whose lordship over his spirit is so irresistibly present. He argues no more about the physical evidence. He has words only to greet the true spiritual King of his life, “My Lord and my God.” With the confession is joined the shame that ever he should have doubted the eternal and enduring

power of His spiritual sway. The evidence was given according to his heart's desire ; but leanness came with it. He was unsatisfied still. Blessed indeed were those who had not seen and yet had believed. Blessed were they whose spirits had rested in the spiritual witness which undoubted love, goodness and purity brought with it. Blessed were they who believed Him for what He was in Himself, without being sent to the lower witness of His works (St. John x. 38). Blessed indeed were they who believed the witness of the Spirit—who had not seen and yet had believed.

Christ, then, granted the evidence which the disciple asked ; but, when so granted, it brought a rebuke. In all these incidents, and especially in granting the evidence which was asked, Christ showed that He understood Thomas. For, in this case, it was well that the proof asked should be given. Not in every case is it well that a certain stipulated evidence should be supplied merely because it has been asked for. The demand that proof of a particular kind shall be given here and now is not always a wholesome or a reasonable one. In every department of life and thought there is a fit and appropriate time of evidence ; and men are expected to understand the principles which are at work before they can appreciate the kind of evidence

which the case is capable of, and which, therefore, in fairness should be demanded. But in the case of Thomas we are not directly concerned with this aspect of the question. The fitness of which we speak concerns the temperament of the disciple, and our Lord's method of dealing with it.

Underlying all the querulousness and gloom of the Apostle's action and temperament there was one strong and absorbing attachment. The very passionateness of this attachment was allowed by Thomas to intensify the despondency of his temperament. That attachment was his supreme love of his Lord. He was so passionately fond (if we may use the expression) that the doubts and fears which he felt were quickened into agony by his very love. His gloomy and despondent temperament made his love full of vivid apprehensions. He feared greatly, because he loved fondly. It was the character of his temperament to do so. This, therefore, was in him a kind of safeguarding power. He loved much, even while he doubted much through very despondency. His doubts, therefore, were not the hard, dry doubts of a flippant and conceited intellect. They were the misgivings of one whose affection and temperament made it difficult to believe the thing which he desired so greatly, just because he did desire it so greatly. He belonged to the class who would be

found saying on occasions that this thing or that was "too good to be true."

But, pleasant as the strength of this affection was, the moodiness which gathered round it was a weakness. In relation to Christ, it was a weakness which tended to paralyse the ethical quality of his faith, for it led him to distrust the divine love of that which was spiritually lovely, and the divine power to preserve it. He began to lose trust in the eternal goodness. He felt that jealousy of affection which fails to realise that there may be other love as strong and as constant as its own.

In ordinary life, this kind of jealous and grasping sort of love is at times inconvenient. It has an egotism in it, and it is this egotism which largely contributes to the moroseness which it displays. In the sphere of the religious life this characteristic of love has an element of distrust which is perilously near to being profane. It is tempted to doubt whether divine love can take care of its own. It would not formulate such a view, but practically it acts as if this were the case. Like Uzzah, when it sees the trembling of the ark it imagines that its hand is needed to steady it, as though God did not or could not care for His own. Like Thomas, it sees peril threatening the much-loved Master, and it cries, "Let us also go, that we

may die with Him." The answer of the Christ reminds him that God Himself does watch over the footsteps of His children. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Is not man's life apportioned him by God? Does not He know the time and watch till the fitting hour?

It was love, indeed, which moved the anxiety of the Apostle; but his anxiety worked in him distrust of the great love of God, marred the sweetness and strength of his affection, and finally led to an overthrow of that spiritual confidence which is the life-giving atmosphere of religion. It might be love which tempted him to say that the news he heard was too good to be true, but it was love which had been corrupted by egotism and despondency; for surely, as one has said, to say that a thing is too good to be true is to set up our own lovingness as higher than the lovingness of heaven—as though that which was good for us might yet be too good for God to do. Doubtless there are things that we deem good which in being done would not be good at all. But to give out as a universal proposition that there are things too good to be true is to forget that the goodness of God endureth yet daily, and that His tender mercy is over all His works. In the case of Thomas it was to forget that God would not and could not leave His Holy One to see corruption.

The picture, therefore, which Thomas presents to us, is that of a man betrayed by his own temperament. Naturally, a man of passionate attachments and earnest loyalty, he was yet a man of a despondent nature. The despondency coloured his thoughts ; he allowed it to dominate his feelings and his convictions ; it grew, and, at length, spread a haunting doubtfulness over his spirit. A kind of arrogant petulance grew up which blinded him, for the time, to the higher and holier sides of life.

Such he seems to have been, and as such the lesson which his character affords is simple. It is part of our life's struggle to vanquish temperament. The victory of life is not over circumstances alone : it must be a victory over what we are as well as over what we meet. The fight, often in its most real agony and in its profoundest meaning, is a fight against ourselves : the victory lies in rising above ourselves into the clearer region where we can think truly and clearly, no longer warped by our own temperament. As in iron vessels, our compass is often disordered by the very material of which we are wrought. It is the part of wisdom, it is the prerogative of manhood to discover these tendencies, to guard against them, to correct their influence, and to resist their tyranny. Yielded to, the temperament becomes a tyrant ; watched, fought against, planned

against, it may first be subdued, and then serve as a power by the side of light, goodness and truth. Yet not of ourselves can this victory be achieved.

The lesson of Thomas shows us that the bias of temperament wrought a distrust of goodness and a doubt of spiritual power. By grasping the eternal forces which are outside us and within us, we may escape from the thralldom of ourselves and the tyranny of temperament. By laying hold of all that Christ is, we grasp the unchanging and eternal strength of God. By realising Him and His victory, we grasp the eternal hope which anchors our spirits safe in the unseen depths of the divine love. Temperament may betray and disable us. High trust in the never-failing goodness and love can save us. Here as always—over temperament as well as over the world—this is the victory that overcometh every foe without and within, even our faith. Happy are they who do not demand that their eyes shall attest what their hearts know. Happy are they who can trust love without the assuring grasp of the hand. Happy are they who live, knowing that the love of God is deep and real and changeless. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.

MATTHEW

"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, 'Follow Me.' And he arose and followed Him "

MATT. ix. 9

MATTHEW

IN the early life of men and communities, the power most admired is physical power. Those who can conquer in the material world are the heroes of the young. Later, men think more of intellectual achievements. The greatest in the schools is the greatest in the world. In the maturest stage of life we are content with less conspicuous feats; for we see that the less may be the greater. We deem it greater to conquer in the realm of moral life than in the field of nature or the arena of intellect. The conqueror in the field of battle may be great, but the conqueror of the hearts of men is greater. A brother offended may be harder to win than the bars of a castle, but so much the nobler is the victory. To win men is a nobler achievement than the defeat of men's bodies or the confounding of their minds.

We thus judge also of the works of our Lord. There was a time in which His greatest works seemed to

be those which showed His power over nature. The appeal was to miracles. The blind see. The lame walk. The lepers are cleansed. The dead are raised up. There was a time also in which His words were appealed to. Never man spake like this man. No teaching was like His. But there were greater works than these. There are deeds more eloquent than great exploits or lofty philosophies. It may please some to think that the best history of the world is the history of its battles ; but there are better victories than Marathon or Austerlitz. The efforts which end in securing for mankind a purer and freer life are more noble and more significant than the victorious flags on fields of war. It is better to restore a ruined heart than to build a cathedral. It is better to help a soul to a spiritual victory than, like Saul, to have slain our thousands. To feed the hungry mind of Nicodemus is more than the feeding of the five thousand. To calm the stormy heart of the Magdalen is more than the stilling of the waves of the sea. To restore Zacchæus to hope and self-respecting life is more than the raising of Lazarus from the dead. And this is so because the life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. And further, in seeing what our Lord did for the hearts and spirits of men, we see that which is more to us than His miracles ; for we

see Him touching nature as we know it and understand it. These things bring us nearer to Him, for they show how near He is to us.

The story of Matthew may illustrate Christ's power over men exercised with a sweet naturalness which is more wonderful than any miracle.

There is the incident told by the Evangelist in such very simple words.

"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him."

Now, we may observe that there is no introduction or preparation on the part of the sacred writer before he tells us this simple story. He does not enter into any history of the man. He tells us nothing of his life beforehand. He enters into no description of any previous intercourse between our Lord and Matthew. He gives the barest outline of the incident, and yet how vivid it all is. We see the man, Matthew, seated at his usual business; he is in his office, as we should say, close by the lake-side; he is receiving the payment of the tax or duty on the goods which were brought to shore. In the middle of his work he drops his hand; he rises; he leaves all and goes after Christ. Jesus said to him, Follow Me. And he

arose and left all, and followed Him. It is very simple.

And yet how astonishing it is. For consider the man and his circumstances and his relations to society, and we shall be able to estimate the wonderful character of the victory which Christ achieved that day.

Religious people are perhaps a little disposed to underrate the influence of occupation on character ; and yet it is a very real influence. It is not of no moment to a man's character whether he is a lawyer, or a manufacturer, or a banker, or a soldier. Every business brings its own peculiar temptations ; and in so far as those temptations master people their characters receive a special modification. The drill and discipline of the soldier calls forth certain qualities of fidelity and promptness ; but, on the other hand, the long, unoccupied hours bring their temptations. The man who is only a money-lender is in a very different atmosphere from the man whose work is productive in its character. A manufacturer must take some interest in the quality of the goods which he produces. He must understand in a practical way something of the laws of nature or the laws of beauty ; he must be in some degree scientific and æsthetic. This necessity carries his mind into regions which are other than the realm of mere money-

getting. The necessity is a way of escape from the temptation of regarding the making of money as the supreme end of all effort.

But in a position such as Matthew occupied, there was little to break the monotony of idea which spread over it all. It was merely a question of getting money. It was part of his calling to make the most he could out of those whose goods he had the right to tax. He farmed the office, and having paid so much for the privilege, he felt himself free to make as much as he could. There was much dishonesty in the collection of revenue at that time of the world's history; and public opinion was not as it is to day strenuous against malpractices of the kind. And even if there were no actual dishonesty, there were plenty of opportunities of straining a right to its uttermost, and resorting to actions which, if somewhat oppressive, were also very profitable. The post was sought because there was money in it. It was taken with the view of making money. Nobody objected strongly to the making of the money. From day's end to day's end, the whole business was the gathering and the accumulating of wealth. It was thus an occupation of unrelieved money-making; it was an occupation in which the generous and purer impulses had little play, and in which the hard, alert, money-

getting quality was cultivated constantly and necessarily.

The horizon of such a man's life narrows. The road before him is like a road with lofty hedges ; the outside landscape is seldom seen and never heeded ; the road runs straight forward ; wealth is its goal. We are creatures of habit ; and even if a man began without any special avaricious tendency, it would be strange indeed if he did not at last become engrossed in a life in which greed and gain joined hands, and in which covetousness became the hinge of every action.

Now there is no passion so tenacious as covetousness. Most of the passions which rule men are exposed before long to some withering influences. The passions of young life are bound up with our physical nature, and with changed physical conditions their supremacy may be undermined. The passions of manhood, like ambition and the love of power, are shaken by stormy weather. Ambition learns its emptiness, and the love of power finds that it has embraced a shadow. Thus the passions of youth and manhood may be weakened by physical and social changes. But covetousness is the vice of age, and it knows no decay. The shortening years make men cling to their possessions all the more closely. Youth is open-handed ; it is ignorant of life's difficulties ; its generous impulses have not yet

been dulled by the cold and bitter knowledge of the world. But age is hard-fisted ; it knows how hardly wealth is won ; it knows how greatly wealth is esteemed. It has lost the modesty of youth, and it can insist on its own ; it is impervious to public opinion, and cares little about being unpopular when it knows that it is envied. Covetousness, unlike other passions, grows stronger with advancing years. The power of pleasure dies, the value of fame is found to be unsubstantial, but wealth is hard, solid, lasting—more real than the vain things which charmed our younger years. So wealth is loved, and covetousness grows, and becomes a tyrant vice with increasing years. It was a true instinct which led Dante to picture avarice as an invincible foe. In his pilgrimage he passed safely by the leopard of pleasure ; he feared, yet was not vanquished by, the lion of ambition ; but the lean wolf of avarice drove him step by step back to the darkness. Such is the power of covetousness. It is a vice which renews its strength and is tenacious and remorseless. It was to the influence and ascendancy of this vice that Matthew was exposed.

And society left him unprotected against its domination. The attitude of society towards men and their occupations may be a helpful or hindering influence. Society sometimes affords men a way of

escape from the tyranny of their vices. This is the case when a man feels that he is expected to undertake some useful public work. Society looks for his help in certain ways. Whatsoever he may wish, the mere pursuit of pleasure or gain is a kind of disloyalty when society expects a man to take up the duties of citizenship or official life. In free communities the opening of civic or senatorial life often affords a means of escape from the tyranny of unworthy vices. But when no such opening exists a man is thrust back upon himself and upon the narrow life of his occupation. He becomes the victim of the monotony of his calling. The vices to which it gives rise are bound upon him as by inevitable chains.

Such was the case with Matthew ; for society shut upon him the door of public life. He was a publican. That was enough. Society scorned him, refused to consort with him. He met with no welcome at her feasts ; it would have been vain on his part to hope for social recognition. He was thrown upon himself. If he must have any pride in life, it cannot be in serving his town or neighbourhood ; it can only be in the success of his occupation. If he cannot be a social or civic magnate, he can be a man whose wealth excites the wonder of society. He can revenge himself upon society by the accumula-

tion of money. They may scorn him, but he can enjoy the secret satisfaction of knowing that he can buy them up. He can repay their scorn of his occupation with the scorn of their comparative poverty.

Thus occupation and the attitude of society combined to stiffen and strengthen the love of gain in the heart of the publican. Matthew was thus not merely a man following a certain trade, but engaged in an occupation which fostered the most relentless of vices, at whose shrine society drove him to worship.

It is not easily or quickly that chains such as these are broken. Yet the story tells us that in a moment the victory was accomplished, and that by One who used no bribe and promised no advantage. "Jesus said, Follow Me ; and he arose and left all and followed Him." So runs the narrative. Now men do not act thus without some motive. There must be some strong inducement before a man can thus in a moment break through the bonds of habit, passion, and interest. But the inducements which usually move men are not apparent in the story. There is no argument, there is no pleading. No good fortune is promised, no seductive expedients are employed. Whatever else we may think of the story, it is the narrative of a

change more truly wonderful than any miracle. That Christ did by a word heal a man of the palsy, bidding the stiff and withered muscles once more obey the reasoning will, is surely less wonderful than that He should thus call back to free action the powers and passions of the soul long drawn to baser uses. The uplifting of the heart, and the endowing of it with fresher and sweeter desires, is a greater thing than the invigoration of the enfeebled frame. It would be a mightier service to humanity if any one could release the mass of mankind from the slavery of covetousness than if he were to free them from the power of some disease. If we reflect upon the blessing which such an emancipation would be, we shall understand the transcendent value of the deliverance which Christ wrought in the case of Matthew.

To some it seems enough to say that, of course, this great deliverance wrought for Matthew was a simple matter enough, seeing that it was wrought by Him to whom was given all power in heaven and earth. But this is no real explanation at all; for it is, I suppose, a truism in religion that whatever methods divine wisdom may devise to bring man back to Himself, divine omnipotence will never be employed to coerce man to such a return. Even were it possible to do so, the result would not be

the end which divine love and wisdom have in view. The only return which love desires is the return of a reasonable conviction and a consenting heart. God draws, but it is with bands which draw the heart of man. He asks no enforced service. The creature, being made with a moral nature and moral powers, can only enter into relationship with the Creator on a moral basis. Here omnipotence restrains itself, if we may so speak. We have, therefore, a right to ask further concerning Christ's method of working this wondrous change in the publican Matthew.

There were influences at work. A little reflection will show us what these were. The startlingly sudden change was not so instantaneous as it appeared. Round the publican's life influences—gentle, suggestive, awakening, appealing—had been at work. Matthew, though scorned by society, did not live out of the world. Galilee was a busy and populous district. The traffic across the lake was large and constant. The shore side was the rendezvous of many classes of folk, where the gossip of the neighbourhood was freely discussed. In one sense Matthew was favourably situated for hearing the rumours which were brought along the great trading route from the outside world, or the local news of the cities of the plain or the Jordan valley.

Thus, he cannot fail to have heard of the preaching of John the Baptist. We know how the whole of the immediate neighbourhood was moved by the great preacher of righteousness. A sterner ideal of life had been held up before men. They had been warned to abstain from violence, to extort no more than was appointed to them, and to recognise the claim of the poor and needy. In some degree the profound impression of this preaching must have reached Matthew. Vague feelings of the unworthiness of life when not governed by high principle filled men's hearts when the Baptist preached. The wave of such emotions spread rapidly through a population, like that of Galilee, of quick and lively sensibilities.

The preaching of the Baptist was followed by the ministry of Christ. The story of His works began to be noised abroad. In all quarters the fame of the wonder-working Prophet was discussed. He had healed a nobleman's son at Capernaum. He had spoken a word, and the paralytic, whom Matthew himself may have known, had risen up, strong and vigorous, before them all. Nay, more, the folk who disembarked at the lake-side had whispered the wonderful story of the tempest which left off its raging at the word of Christ. And what a teaching was that of the Prophet! He came preaching the

kingdom of God. His teaching was that that kingdom was everywhere, and that the King of all was a Father-King. Men should trust Him as a child trusts his father ; for God, too, loved His children, and desired to see them happy. The careful and anxious spirit which sought to accumulate was, no less than the greedy spirit, the spirit which distrusted a Father's love. How unworthy was the life which only aimed at heaping up riches ! How unlike the life of one who realised that he was a child of God, pledged by his origin to do his Father's will ! The greed of gain was servitude to Mammon and disloyalty to God. Whether Matthew himself ever stood among the crowds who heard such teaching, we cannot say ; but it is difficult to imagine that the spirit of such teaching was not carried to the ears of one who must have heard at the receipt of custom each freshly reported utterance of any conspicuous personage, the last scandal from Herod's court, the last rumour from Jerusalem, or the last discourse of the Galilean Prophet. .

Slowly such influences sank into Matthew's heart. A low discontent began to make itself felt. His life, though successful as far as money was concerned, was not satisfactory to himself. It offered no worthy scope for his better feelings and higher aspirations. He saw other men who had found new

life and heart-satisfaction in attaching themselves to Christ. Men whom he had known personally, from whom he had received tribute or custom, or whose diligence in their calling he had observed, had abandoned their vocation at the Prophet's call. Peter and Andrew, whose house was near at hand, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with them, had joined themselves to Christ. All these things tended to rouse the curiosity and increase the restless dissatisfaction of Matthew's mind. The ideal of a higher life began to shine upon his spirit, and his own life appeared mean, sordid, and unworthy in comparison. The Prophet of Galilee had wrought wonders, taught faith, drawn men to His side, and in the stainless splendour of His own life of trust and lovingness had evoked a craving for a worthier life in the heart of the despised publican.

While matters were in this state, there came the moment of crisis. Seated at the receipt of custom one day, Matthew heard the words of Christ's invitation, "Follow Me." There was a world of meaning in those simple words. Heard by the man whose perplexities, and inward discontents, and heart yearnings for better things had long been his companions, they meant much.

"Follow Me." To the man scorned by the Pharisee, and bitterly conscious of the world's con-

tempt, the words meant : " I know you ; I know the sadness and bitterness of your lot. You think that no one cares what becomes of you, and you have armed yourself with the pride of wealth against the world's scorn ; but you are wrong. I care for you : I know and I seek your good.

" ' Follow Me.' Society has closed its doors upon you, and you are trying to content yourself with wealth, as though in it you could find a compensation for the loss of the world's good opinion. But man is born for companionship, society, and the pride of wealth repaying with scorn the scorn of society can bring no satisfaction. You may find the satisfaction of your social yearnings in the brotherhood to which I call you. The world may shut its door upon you, but I open to you the door of an Eternal Society. Follow Me.

" ' Follow Me.' There is a better life before you. You are uneasy in the life you are living ; the hints and reports of higher teaching which have awakened your discontent may give birth to aspirations which have seemed too lofty to be realised. You thought yourself fettered in your dull life ; you thought that the life of a pure and noble devotion to the world's good was a thing far away out of your reach. But, behold, it is open to you. I not only live for the good of the world, but I call you to live as I have

done. The better, higher, truer life is not impossible to you : I summon you to it. Follow Me."

When the voice of Christ thus fell on his ears it carried a message full of meaning which only the weary and restless heart could understand. It was the message of new possibilities. His life need not be lost in sordid ways. It was a message of welcome into the midst of a brotherhood of earnest spirits. It was the assurance of a love which understood his life, his inner struggles, his thwarted and broken-winged aspirations. It was a message of love, and of a love which understood him, and met the needs of his heart, his conscience, and his life.

Such was Christ's method with this lonely and society-scorned man. It was the method of love.

The method succeeded. The immediate result was not the only result. Matthew rose up and forsook all and followed Christ. But beyond the immediate action there was the life. And the life bore witness that the emotions stirred had been no passing emotions. The act of Matthew was the act of his whole being, and his whole after-life was the evidence of the depth and strength of his convictions. To put it in another way, we may ask, When Christ laid hold of this publican, what did He make of him ? The publican became the man of earnest hospitality who opened his house to men despised like himself,

and sought to bring them under the influence of Christ. The publican became one of the twelve Apostles, working in those great and early days for the foundation of the kingdom of God amongst men.

The publican Levi became Matthew the Evangelist, to whom we owe the record of the words and teaching of Christ which otherwise had not been ours. To him we owe the parables of the unforgiving servant, and of the Ten Virgins, the wonderful picture of the judgment of Christ and the separation of the sheep from the goats. In these narratives told by St. Matthew alone we can discern the elements which must have been attractive to one who had tasted the bitterness of the world's scorn, and had learned the omnipotence of simple love. Hard, unforgiving dispositions exile men from the kingdom of love (Matt. xviii. 21—end). The lack of the oil of love makes dim the light of the Christian's lamp (Matt. xxv. 1—13). The pitiless refusal to give free play to the impulses of love—this, and this alone, sets men on the left hand in the day of Christ's judgment (Matt. xxv. 31—46). He had learned that love could translate a man from hell to heaven, and he lingered over the stories which preached love to the world; and there is a special fitness that Matthew should be the Evangelist who records to us those words (perhaps sweetest of all Christ's words),

"Come unto Me, all that are weary and heavy laden." To few men could they speak with greater force than to the publican who had known what the weariness and burdensomeness of life meant, and who understood by experience how lonely and how far from sympathy even a prosperous lot might be. He had been weary and heavy laden ; he had heard the magic call, "Come unto Me" ; he had risen ; he had followed ; he had found in the love of Christ and in the yoke of Christ rest unto his soul.

Thus of the man whose life had been buried in unworthy occupations Christ made the earnest, large-hearted, and liberal citizen, the devoted Apostle, the sweet writer of an Evangel that sounds with notes of love down the Christian centuries.

The lesson is not far to seek.

Christ can win, when the world, with all its vaunted power and safeguards, can only fail. Where Pharisee and Sadducee only succeeded by their hard ostracism in producing bitterness, and scorn, and covetous isolation, Christ touched, softened, and captivated a human heart.

Christ can utilise materials which the world rejects as useless. There have always been classes in society which are regarded as hopeless, past praying for, past working for. But those whom society

regards as lost are those whom Christ came to save. In this Christ shows His power as well as His love. It is the mark of genius to utilise the refuse of the world. The genius of Christ's love raises and restores what man has cast away. The bruised reed flung down as useless, incapable of any further melody, He repairs, and breathes through its pipes the music of heaven. Out of the smoking flax discarded by men He makes a torch to illumine the world.

Christ wins, and Christ can utilise the waste material of life because He goes deep enough into the life and heart of man to waken the love which slumbers there. He proclaims to the sad-hearted who deems himself scorned, forgotten, unbeloved, that there is a love which has watched him always, which has understood him, and which seeks to win his heart. He proclaims to the man who despairs of breaking the bonds of unworthy employment, that a better and regenerate life is possible to him. Nay, He calls him to it. As He wakens love, so He wakens hope for men. He wins, for there is healing in His touch and magic in His voice ; but the healing power is the power of hope, and His only magic is the magic of His love.

NATHANAEL

*"Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing
come out of Nazareth?"*

JOHN I. 46

NATHANAEL

IF we measure power by the character of the obstacles which it overcomes, we ought to give the highest place to moral power. Forces of other kinds, whether physical or intellectual, can never win so high or so exalted a victory as can that moral influence which brings the whole character of man under its sway. St. Paul said that he had rather speak five words that could be understood than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. The reason was simple ; he would rather persuade than astonish men ; it was a more noble thing to sway their hearts than to astonish and bewilder their ears. On the same principle, in the view of right-judging people, the feats of a Samson or a Hercules, and the victories of an Alexander and a Cæsar, must rank immeasurably below the conquests of the apostle, the missionary, and the philanthropist. This is the reason why to many our Lord's greatest work is not seen in commanding the sea or in feeding the

multitude, but in swaying the spirits of men, and feeding that soul-hunger which righteousness and love alone can appease. In these moral victories of our Lord we see the depth and significance of His power. He shows Himself master of the hearts of men. In the case of Matthew He vanquishes the subtle and tenacious power of avarice. In the case of Nicodemus He triumphs over doubt and fear. In the case of Nathanael He conquers prejudice.

It has, indeed, been said that the words of Nathanael, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" have been misunderstood, and that they imply no prejudice against Nazareth. I do not think that such a gloss will be generally accepted. The prejudice against Nazareth lingered long. To speak of the Christians as Nazarenes was to hold them up to contempt. The Talmudists call the Lord "Hannozeri," or "Ben Nezar." The Arabs call the Christians "En-Nusara" to this day. The question of Nathanael seems to embody the prejudice, and to embody it with the matter-of-course air which local and accepted opinion only could adopt. Nathanael sees in the very name of Nazareth a reason against accepting Philip's statement. "We have found Him of whom Moses and the Prophets did write . . . Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. So Philip spoke. And

Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth ? ”

We may, then, fairly treat the difficulties of Nathanael as the difficulties of prejudice. The obstacle to be encountered by the power and influence of Christ is the obstacle of that wide-spread, difficult, and obstinate attitude of mind, which arises from the habit of predetermining, in deference to some mistaken conviction or unreasoning feeling, questions which pre-eminently demand dispassionate and conscientious consideration.

It will be well to consider the strength of this obstacle.

We may, without injustice, speak of prejudice as a great and universal force. When Bacon spoke of the *idola* which hindered men in reaching truth, he was describing the variety of the powers of prejudice. When Herbert Spencer delineates the different kinds of bias which operate in men's minds, he is but telling us that prejudices, arising from mental habit or social or local surroundings, sway men's powers of reasoning and raise barriers against the reception of truth.

Of the strength of this many-sided power we have abundant examples in the history of the past. Never was there a new invention, a new departure in art, an original effort for social advance or religious pro-

gress, which did not encounter the dead, dull weight of the opposition of general prejudice. Machinery is invented to lessen the expenditure of human effort in labour. Prejudice raises riot against the invention, and the machines are flung into the flames. Sir Joshua Reynolds takes his own line in protest against the unnatural conventional art of his day. Prejudice raises against him the frowns of men and the discouragement of the averted countenances of wealthy patrons. Wordsworth will sing as nature bids him sing. Prejudice will pelt him with hostile and unappreciative criticism.

Let a man seek to promote social advance; let him preach the blessings of fresh air and fresh water—prejudice will persuade society that he is a faddist. Prejudice, entrenched behind the strong fortress of monetary interests, will bid the world hoot, deride, and resist the noble men who seek, with Wilberforce and Clarkson, to mitigate the miseries of the middle passage, and to set free the slaves. The simplest and most obvious social improvements have had to fight their way against this myriad-handed, myriad-tongued foe of all upward movements.

In the sphere of religion, prejudice has been strong, and strong with an intensity which has become proverbial. Theological prejudice has played havoc with the hearts of men. It has transformed

gentle and loving spirits into fierce and relentless partisans. The man who in other moments wrote hymns which breathed of meekness and love, dips his pen in gall when he writes against some theological opponent. The man who would not harm a fly is ready, at the bidding of controversial prejudice, to hand over to a cruel death those who have presumed to differ from him on some point of speculative divinity. Once let the Apostles speak, and prejudice will declare them pestilent fellows, and hale them to prison and to death. Origen must be traduced, Athanasius must be slandered, Wycliffe must be threatened, Döllinger pursued with rancour, Maurice thrust from his chair. He who would improve the conditions of life, ameliorate the lot of his fellows, promote peace and good-will among men, must be prepared to enter into conflict with prejudice, the octopus which dwells in the deep sea of ignorance and indolence.

If this power of prejudice is thus generally strong, it had a special force among the Jews of our Lord's day. Everything had combined to deepen and strengthen its hold upon the people. National and religious influences combined to increase its power. Religion had been reduced to a system of rules, and wherever this is the case prejudice grows strong. Every custom, however infinitesimal the matter may

be, is exalted to the dignity of a sacred and divinely-authorised principle. Principles which are the *raison d'être* of rules having disappeared, rules take their place, and all are deemed equally important, equally divine. The whole field of life is covered. An inadvertence may be a blasphemy, and the violation of some petty precept may be a sin against a divine order. The diversities of personal feeling, and the varieties of hereditary characteristics are forgotten. All men and all races are treated as alike. Not merely standards of ethics but standards of ceremonial are reduced to one level. What is wrong in one man cannot be right in another. All are in one lot. All life is under one *régime*. All light and shade disappear. One fierce sun pours its hot beams down upon a level land. The sweet varieties of temperament, feeling, and character, which produce happy varieties of growth and beauty, are ignored. Prejudice rains its rules down upon all alike. The rules, in their turn, give back new strength to the ruling power of prejudice. The Jewish people of the day were thus tied and bound in a religion of rules.

Religious prejudice was aggravated by national prepossessions ; local prejudices grew into principles. Truths lost their moral force by being made mechanical and geographical. Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship. The ideal was lost ;

the literalist triumphed. God's voice could not speak freely in His kingdom. God's breath could not breathe, like the wind of heaven, where it listed. It was a fixed idea that some districts of God's dear world were excluded from His smile and the power of His presence. "Search and look; for out of Galilee arises no prophet." Thus prejudice held victorious sway in the hearts of the men of Christ's day. Prejudice, strong everywhere, ruled among the Jews with an iron sceptre. These national and religious prejudices held sway in the mind of Nathanael. His words give utterance to them. The objection is quick on his lips—"Can any good come out of Nazareth?"

In what soil has this prejudice taken its roots? Is the soil favourable to its growth?

We know something of the character of Nathanael. He is a man guileless and devout. He is simple and earnest. He loves to pray under the shadow of the fig-tree. He is a sincere and pious man. These are pleasant and attractive characteristics; they are features which may be of inestimable service to one who is enlisted in a good cause. But they do not of themselves tend to banish prejudice. On the contrary, there are some elements in them which tend to strengthen it. Let no man marvel that our very virtues may be the means by which

our prejudices grow strong. Sincerity is an excellent virtue, but sincerity has often added fresh and fatal zest to the persecuting spirit. A guileless man is the very man who may hug his prejudice the closer, precisely because he is guileless. A man of guile has no strong convictions ; it would not answer his *rôle* to be greatly in earnest ; he must be prepared to shift his ground as occasion arises ; but guilelessness and sincerity cling to their convictions, and thus are in danger of giving greater tenacity to the power of prejudice. Sincere-minded men are often obstinate. Devout minds are often timid ; and timidity grasps its opinions with a strong and tenacious hold ; it fears change, and it has a prejudice in favour of what is old and accepted.

Thus the very virtues of Nathanael's character probably added strength to the national and religious prejudices which he shared with others.

Thus prejudice was the obstacle which our Lord had to encounter in his case,—prejudice, that great and universal force, strong in a Jewish mind, and intensified in a character whose virtues were guilelessness and sincerity.

Our Lord's victory over Nathanael is, as in other cases, complete. We see this by means of the vivid contrast which the narrative of the Evangelist sets before us. The man who doubts whether any good

can come out of Nazareth recognises in Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee one who was Rabbi, Son of God and King of Israel. "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" is his first utterance. "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel," is his declaration after he has met, seen, and conversed with our Lord.

It is well to remember that these titles were not empty phrases on the lips of a Jew. To call a man, Rabbi, Son of God and King of Israel, was no mere complimentary utterance; such phrases carried a rich and recognised significance. Nathanael recognises in our Lord one who, though not a Scribe or a Pharisee, is rightly greeted as Master and Teacher. Though He was untrained in the schools without whose *imprimatur* a man's teaching was doubted, yet Nathanael acknowledges that He is entitled to be hailed as Rabbi. But to Nathanael He is even more than this; He is Son of God. He comes with claims greater than those of earth, and Nathanael recognises them:—"Thou art the Son of God," and the one to whom all Israel may render homage; "Thou art the King of Israel," the true and undoubted Messiah, divinely sent and divinely anointed, to rule over Israel.

It is a great step when any soul can thus leave all its presumptions and difficulties behind and step

into the presence of one whom it can recognise as the fulfilment of its dreams and the satisfaction of its desires. We may speak of the value of independence, and its value is great and its cultivation is needful for the maturing of the human spirit; but in its search for independence the soul is truly seeking also for that on which it can rest without the sacrifice of that which is greater than mere comfort, its moral and spiritual integrity. The great problem for earnest souls is often the solution of the question how to find the rest which can satisfy spirit while maintaining its own inward uprightness. All the moral forces, all the better nature, as we say, must be reconciled, or peace and rest is impossible. But whoever comes with power to reconcile these and to bestow the gift of love, is acknowledged as rightful lord of the soul. The spirit bows at once in homage to its king. Thus Nathanael gave his allegiance to our Lord. His spirit had found its divine satisfaction, its teacher, its king. So complete was the victory expressed in his declaration of homage—"Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel."

When so complete and true a victory is accomplished we are curious about the methods by which it has been achieved. But the methods of Jesus Christ are not as the methods of men. In all His work He shows the homage of His heart and life to

the eternal order of righteousness. No victory is worth having, no victory is a true one which is not won in harmony with the everlasting laws of right and truth.

What, then, was the method of our Lord ? There is no employment of mere force. A conquest so achieved was a conquest He would have disdained as a victory which left humiliation at the door of the conqueror. Not such is Christ's method. He rather wins by the revelation of the man to himself. He only can reign in the heart who finds a way through the labyrinth by which every human heart is surrounded ; and though men are in one sense all alike, and all have about them an intricate maze through which we must pass to reach the heart, yet the pathways in the maze are not alike in all. We may know our way to the heart of some. Few possess the master-key which can unlock the hearts of all. But Christ, in the variety of His methods and the completeness of His victory, shows a mastery over the intricate ways of the hearts of men ; and what seemed impossible to men, appears to be a simple and natural action on His part. He, like the Good Shepherd, enters by the door, and the sheep hear His voice, and they know His voice and they follow Him.

The first thing which strikes us about Christ's

method of dealing with Nathanael is the wonderful unity of idea which is expressed in Christ's words. There is one topic which is uppermost. The keynote of all that our Lord says is the thought of Jacob who became Israel. Let us keep in mind the story of the patriarch and we shall see that allusions to the story fill the words of our Lord. The first greeting of Nathanael carries us back to the guileful Jacob who sought to win his birthright by subtlety. The contrast which is expressed in Christ's words calls to mind the Old Testament story. "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." No subtle supplanter is here, but one who bears rightly the name which Jacob won in conflict and prayer. The thought moves at once to the ford of Jabbok, and we see the patriarch wrestling with the unknown traveller, and refusing to part with him till the blessing is won. We call to mind the struggle of Jacob when he sought to know the name of his mysterious adversary. The long night of solitary prayer rises before our minds. The blessing which comes in answer to it is the blessing not only of a revelation of the divine presence, but of a revolution in the suppliant's heart of a changed nature.

But others have prayed and sought God's face as Jacob did. Beneath the fig-tree Nathanael's soul had been poured forth in prayer. In common with

others, he longed for some fuller revelation of God. Messages which spoke of God's nearer presence had been given to Israel. The prophet of fire had proclaimed the way of the Lord. Hints, speculations, and hopes were rife; the souls of devout and holy men were stirred; they knew not quite what to think, but they had their help in prayer; in secret places and in shadowed spots they had wrestled in prayer for light, for some glimpse of the face of the Messiah and messenger of God. Under the fig-tree Nathanael had prayed with hope strong within his heart. Would heaven open, and would the light of God be seen? Would angels meet him on the path of life and bring an answer to his heart's desire? Or was his lot cast in times when God was no longer near to His people as He had been of old?

Were thoughts such as these in his mind as he knelt beneath the fig-tree? If so, did he cast longing glances backward, and yearn for those days when the God of Israel had appeared to His saints of old? Had his thoughts gone back to the story of the patriarch, who found heaven open as he slept on the bare hillside? Or did he call to mind the night of the patriarch's struggle when he wrestled in importunate prayer, and saw at last the face of God and lived? It may have been that this was the direction of his thoughts, and at least our Lord's

words suggest that Nathanael was one who had longed to see the vision of God, and who had sought God's face as Jacob had.

And what is the message Christ gives to such an one? We have but to recall Christ's words. "Behold," such was His greeting to Nathanael, "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." And then when Nathanael asked in surprise, "Whence knowest Thou me?" Christ answered, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee;" not the words only, but the voice and the tones of love, carried their message to Nathanael's soul. The meaning is clear to him. The message carries the authentication and claim of love. His prayers and desires are known and understood. He had thought of himself as alone, struggling in prayer and surrounded by perplexity, living in an age when God seemed far off, and when there was no open vision for the sons of men. But, lo! there has been One near at hand who has known and understood. Like Jacob, he had deemed that he was an exile from the revelation of God and the ministry of His love; but, lo! like Jacob, too, he awakes, and finds that the divine light is near. The spot where he had prayed was "none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven."

Christ speaks, and Nathanael realises that all

along he had been beneath the watchful eye of a divine and protecting love. To him comes the revelation of One who had seen and known the thoughts and desires of his soul. The voice which speaks is the voice of One who dissolves prejudice by the manifestation of truth in harmony with the secret thoughts of Nathanael's heart. And yet it is not the revelation of a set of truths which wins him. It is the revelation of One who is truth, and who shows Himself to have the right to take possession of the soul. Christ compels the worship of the heart by showing that He is lord of it, that He understands the movements of the inward spirit, and that, as He understands, so He can love, feel for, and guide the soul. He gave voice to the man's own desires. He revealed Nathanael to himself. But He did more. He came as the satisfaction of his desires, as the One for whom men yearn, and on whom they can rest as the watchful One and the understanding One, and so the rightful King. Thus He revealed Himself to Nathanael. He won the victory, not by controverting by argument, but by converting by love. This was Christ's method. He banished prejudice by the revelation of Himself as the truth, and the realisation of men's highest aims, and the living friend of their spirits. When He had been seen

and known, prejudice vanished as darkness at the dawn.

It is thus as victor over prejudice that Christ appears in the case of Nathanael.

Centuries have passed, but men are the same ; and prejudice holds sway at this hour, notwithstanding the warnings of history and the disastrous examples of its fatal power in the experience of the ages. Still men decide questions by prepossessions, by local or sentimental antipathies. Good still, in the view of many, lies only here and there. There are some places, people, countries, and societies, out of which no good can come. The prejudice against Christianity, because of its birthplace, has not disappeared. It is still a difficulty to men to understand why out of Judæa should come the moral Ruler of the nations and the spiritual King of men. It is still a problem and stumbling-block to some that Christ should claim to achieve what science cannot accomplish. It is needless to point out the cases in which this question is still asked, "Can any good come out of Nazareth ?"

And often as the question is asked, the answer of faith is the right one, "Come and see." It is the answer of good sense ; and true faith is always possessed of a certain wholesomeness of understanding which declines to coerce men. It seeks

rather to convince than to compel ; it desires a free field ; it invites investigation. Its answer is, "Come and see."

Christianity cries to the hesitating world, "Come and see." The things which human hope has despaired of, have been achieved by the moral and spiritual power of Christ. In every nation, and under every sky, Christ has been acclaimed as Lord. The power of His presence has been felt where the wild tribes look with wonder upon the great Pacific Ocean, where mighty rivers roll past the unexplored darkness of the primeval forests of Africa, and beneath the sultry skies and giant mountains of India. From every race and every continent there comes back this answering challenge, "Come and see." "Come and see" that men have grown better and nobler, that habits have improved, manners have been elevated, hearts regenerated, and lives converted. "Come and see" that the most rooted prejudices, supported by demoralising customs and degrading beliefs, have melted away before the revelation of Christ, and of all that He is to the hearts of men.

"Come and see." Bring yourself face to face with Christ Himself. Try to understand His words and His character. You will realise that you have never been outside of divine watchfulness and love.

You will realise that, even in the dullest hour, when you have lifted lame hands towards heaven, and deemed that you were praying fruitless prayers to an unanswering sky, your thoughts were known and your desires understood, and that, whether heaven answered or seemed to answer not, you were yet within the grasp of the Eternal One, who never wearies and never forgets. You will realise that there is in Christ a never-dying revelation of life to men. His life will be seen to be the best life. What He is in Himself, in His character and love, will shed a guiding light upon the pathway of duty. He, in His own self-revealing, will be your teacher. From His character will shine the light which is most truly divine—the light of goodness, purity, lovingness, and truth. He will take possession of the heart; none other, no lesser or meaner one, shall be your king—the monarch of your soul and the king of all that is good and guileless. The loneliness of life—and who does not know the inward solitude which is so awful to bear?—the loneliness of life will pass away. Angels will always be on the path of life; for there will ever be need to relieve and sorrow to soothe, and in the needy and in the sorrowful God's angels and messengers may be met with. For, to whomsoever Christ is known, to him the heavens are always open; and such

an one sees, among all the changes of life, the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

And such a man must needs pass out of the stage of discipleship. He who has seen these things is content, indeed, to be a learner always ; but he is not content only to learn. He has seen the things of God in his own life ; he must teach and he must tell them. The meek and guileless disciple becomes in time a teacher and an apostle : Nathanael, the guileless Israelite, becomes Bartholomew the Apostle. He has seen, and he must testify what he has seen. Christ's victory does not merely banish prejudice and change hesitation into discipleship ; He turns prejudice into conviction, and conviction into enthusiasm. He takes the qualities which might have remained the colourless qualities of a weak and passive devoutness, and infuses into them active energy and apostolic devotion ; and, in the love of God and the love of men which His followers display, He reveals His power of binding men to Himself in loyal allegiance, as to the King who is enthroned in their hearts, and to whose service they have consecrated their lives.

NICODEMUS

*"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus,
a ruler of the Jews : the same came to Jesus by night "*

JOHN iii. 1, 2

NICODEMUS

THE range of a man's influence is sometimes measured by the number of those who follow him. If we apply this test, our Lord's influence was great, for multitudes followed Him, and took delight in His teaching. The common people heard Him gladly. But there is another test besides that of numbers ; and this lies in the variety of the characters which yield to a man's influence. The multitudes which follow a man may be merely an assemblage of like minded men. The influence exerted is in this case only an influence over one type of character. The men are many, but the character is one. But an influence which is exerted over a variety of characters is an influence of a wider range. It possesses a force and a complexity which evince more than mere popular power. The influence of our Lord stands this test. He not only drew crowds after Him, but He established an ascendancy over people of the most diverse characters

and callings. He won His way to the heart of the publican and sinner. He drew the rough fisher folk to His side. He swayed the strong nature of the Baptist, and He inspired the despondent Thomas with new courage. He enlisted the affectionate devotion of Nathanael, and He captured the allegiance of Nicodemus.

His influence was thus not among the unlettered classes only. To the poor indeed was the gospel preached ; but the range of the power of Christ was greater than that of a single class however numerous. His kingdom was set up in the hearts of many men. He had a message for the rich as well as for the poor ; and His ascendancy was over the cultivated as well as the unlearned.

His victory over Nicodemus is an example of His influence among the cultured.

We shall first measure, as far as we can, the difficulties of the task, and then note some features of the victory of Christ over this man's life.

In estimating the difficulties which our Lord had to encounter, we may first take a glance at the surroundings of Nicodemus.

We must remind ourselves that this is Jerusalem and not Galilee. We are stepping from the country to the town, and from the quick and ardent population of Galilee to the more critical people of

Jerusalem. We are not face to face with the rude peasantry or fishermen of the Sea of Tiberias ; we are in the presence of one of the cultivated and educated leaders of opinion, who belongs to the proudest religious sect of the proudest people under heaven.

The background of the scene is different. We are no longer in Galilee where the surrounding scenery embraces the lake and the fishing boats, the barrels of pickled fish ready for transit, the flower-spangled plain or the steep, barren hills of Gaulanitis. We are in the spot where, though night has obscured every object, we feel that the background of the scene is the Temple and its splendid buildings, the Mount Zion, and the recently built palace of Herod, the fortress of Antonia with its barracks and Roman garrison.

The whole tone of society is different. In Galilee there are towns and villages, and farmsteads. The products of the earth, the corn, and wine, and oil are here in abundance. "Men waded in oil," was the phrase of the Rabbis. The land was fertile with vine and olive, and rich meadows. It was filled with an active and busy population. They were not simply agriculturists. Indigo grew near Magdala, and there were dyeing operations carried on there. The Lake or Sea of Galilee yielded its rich harvest

of fish, which were sent to long distances. Gentile towns too were planted here and there. The presence of these, and the intercourse with other lands which trade fostered, tended to expand the thoughts and the sympathies of the people. But at Jerusalem no such widening influences were allowed to work. Here staunch and bitter sectarianism, hard and narrow orthodoxy, held sway. Jerusalem was "the city of pedantry, acrimony, disputes, hatred, and littleness of mind."

This littleness of mind showed itself in contempt for all who were outside the privileged circle which prejudice had drawn. The inhabitants of Galilee were mocked and ridiculed by the Jews. Every maidservant in Jerusalem (says Hausrath) ridiculed their language, and the proverb said, "Can there any good thing come out of Galilee?" or "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" The same littleness showed itself in the bald and mechanical ideas which dried up their religious life. Sanctity, which essentially can only belong to responsible and reasonable beings, was attributed, not metaphorically or by reason of association, but actually and truly, to the implements and material things used in worship. They placed sanctity in the purity, not of the priests but of the vessels, and in the correctness of procedure. To swear by the gold

of the Temple was an oath of greater import than to swear by the Temple. The most simple spiritual precepts were twisted so as to furnish ground for some mechanical rule. The Scripture had said, "Let the word of God be in thy mouth." The Pharisees accordingly insisted that the Scriptures should only be written on parchment made from clean beasts, because no unclean material should enter the mouth. The temperament of mind which such an exposition betrays, is one which has gone far away from moral simplicity. We are not surprised to find that while the mint, anise, and cummin were treated as important, the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and the love of God, were viewed as of little moment.

Profanation is the natural outcome of the straining after external and mechanical purity and the neglect of inward and moral righteousness. Therefore we find that the state of the Temple precincts was disgraceful. In order to avoid one profanation they suffered a worse. The Temple became the rendezvous of the chafferers and bargainners who sought to make a profit of those who came to worship at Jerusalem. The courts of the sanctuary were invaded by the sheep and the oxen. The tables of the fraudulent money changers were erected within the sacred boundaries. The solemn and reverent spirit which

was needful in prayer became difficult if not impossible. The devout worshipper was scandalised to find that the Temple of the Lord looked more like a market or an exchange than a place of worship. The house of prayer was a den of thieves. Religion tended to become a profession. True devotion retreated from the shrine. Jerusalem, which was a place loved and honoured as the city of the Lord, the city which sheltered the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High, quickly dispelled all devout imaginations and dreams from the mind of the earnest pilgrim who visited the Temple full of religious fervour and reverence. A cruel disenchantment was in store for such pious souls. Like as a dream when one awaketh, so the image of the ideal holy city perished out of the pious mind at the sight of the Temple and city as it was. The eyes of simple piety were soon opened, as Luther's were when he visited Rome, and as Doré's young novice in the monastery. The religious atmosphere of Jerusalem was neither wholesome nor pure.

Though the religious condition of Jerusalem was thus deplorable, there were not wanting those who felt disgust at the pious impiety, the hard irreverence, and the stupendous pride which flaunted themselves there. There were men who had tasted of other streams than those which flowed at the bidding

of the Scribe and Pharisee. There were men who had escaped, to some degree, from the spiritual unreality of the officials, and were dissatisfied with the mechanical religiousness of the dominant sect. They longed for larger, kindlier, and more spiritual teaching. Probably they could not have put their longings into words. They knew their own dissatisfaction with things as they were. They could not formulate what they wanted in their place, but to them ideal religious life was not represented in the piety of the day, and their souls desired something which harmonised more completely with their devout feelings. Theirs was the position of doubtful discontent. The old still held its authority over them. They were still Jews, and all the national aspirations and hopes beat in their hearts. They were still under the thralldom of many of the customs and beliefs of their day, but they were in earnest; they wished religion to be a reality in their own life and in the life of their nation.

These, however, were few in number. The general weight and fashion of belief was in the direction of minute, mechanical, and non-moral religionism. Elaborate ceremonial, ostentatious forms of prayer, punctilious observance of insignificant and perplexing rules, were accounted the essentials of worship and the warrant of sanctity.

In the midst of this society, and clearly under the influence of the religious notions of the day, lived Nicodemus. "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews." He was a Pharisee. He belonged to the ruling sect which insisted so vehemently upon a religion of rules and observances, and which regarded correctness of procedure in worship as of more moment than rightness of heart. He was besides a member of the Sanhedrim, the body upon which devolved the direction and maintenance of the faith and morals of the people. He held thus a conspicuous position in Jerusalem. He was also an authorised teacher. "Art thou the teacher of Israel?" our Lord asks in the course of the conversation (John iii. 9).

Such was his position. Can we form any idea of his character? Generally he seems to have been a timid, speculative, and cultivated man.

He desired to visit Christ, but he did not venture to do so in open daylight. He chose the night, when the veil of darkness would conceal him. He had not the courage to face the reckless and ruthless wrath of his fellow-rulers. We can form some idea of their anger and unreasoning bigotry by noticing how fiercely at a later time they turned upon Nicodemus when he ventured to expostulate with them on their blind injustice. He only asked a

question in the most impersonal way relating to the legal method of procedure, and they broke into fierce, irrelevant personal reproach. He asked, "Doth the law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" The only answer he received was: "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee cometh no prophet." The purport of his question was ignored. So full of blind fury were they that they regarded remonstrance on a matter of law as a sign of hostility. Another example of their mad and stupid bigotry is given us in the ninth chapter of St. John. There we have the story of the blind man whom our Lord restored to sight, and we are given a picture of annoyance and intolerance which is ready to sacrifice truth and liberty at the bidding of rancour. When we read these things we are not surprised that a timid man shrank from their venomous and vehement persecution.

The two other characteristics of Nicodemus, his speculative turn of mind and his culture, were calculated to increase his timidity. He takes an interest in the doctrines and actions of the new teacher. He perceives that there is something worth inquiring about in one who has achieved so much. The miracles which Christ had wrought had arrested popular attention. Nicodemus is willing to admit this much, but his own mind is more interested in

the teaching of Christ. He wishes to hear what the new prophet has to say. His cultivation and his speculative tendency lead him in this direction. There is something in the teaching of this Jesus of Nazareth. It is as a teacher sent from God that Nicodemus seeks Him.

One thing we may add. At this time Nicodemus was no longer in his youth or prime. When he asks, "How can a man be born again when he is old?" he is evidently thinking of himself. He feels his age. Whatever might have been possible years ago is impossible now. Age increases timidity. Great achievements, bold and independent action become more difficult as the autumn of life draws near. In advanced years man is afraid of that which is high.

We have then a man who is thoughtful, anxious, perhaps nervous of being seen, with his native timidity increased by years. This is the man who seeks Christ.

All his associations, opinions, and ideas are saturated with the Pharisaic thought of the day. His settled position, his place in public esteem, his habits of mind, are all more or less hostile to the influence of Christ. Natural prejudice, local jealousy, early training, and personal temperament are all obstacles in the way of the victory of Christ.

We are now in a position to estimate the strength of the opposing circumstances which our Lord had to encounter, and which held sway in the heart of Nicodemus. There was the power of public opinion. This is a hard thing to define, and a harder thing to resist. Public opinion is the god of some men, who are idolaters in nothing else. One of the wonders of history is to notice what multitudes of men there are who acquiesce tamely in the fashion and opinion of their time. In England, which boasts its independence and love of freedom, it is hard to understand how the nation acquiesced in the cant of Puritanism at one time, and in the licentiousness of the Restoration at another. This never would have been the case had there not been a certain large proportion of people who swayed thoughtlessly first in one direction and then in another at the bidding of that fashion of the times which is believed to represent public opinion. The great bulk of people bow to this fashion. Their powers of thought, will, and conscience become paralysed in its presence. Like the timid bird beneath the serpent's gaze, they are first spell-bound, and then fall into the open jaws of the power which devours freedom and manhood. Such is the might of public opinion.

This strength of public opinion against our Lord would, in the case of Nicodemus, be increased by

his natural qualities. Speculativeness, which was thoughtful, would suspect any teaching from an ignorant and uncultivated quarter like Galilee. Men of speculative mood are seldom without that fastidiousness which is prejudiced in favour of teaching which originates in the acknowledged centres of light. It naturally prefers opinions which spring from educated sources. It looks askance at doctrines which find favour among those who are deemed illiterate and vulgar. The fact that the common people heard Christ gladly, and that the bulk of His followers were to be found in Galilee, would create an initial prejudice in the mind of a man of cultivated habits.

Further, it was harder for a cultivated man than for an uneducated man to face the frown of society. Culture makes a man keenly alive to the hardships of social ostracism. He has been admitted within the charmed circle. The exclusive chambers whose doors are rigidly closed against the vulgar have been opened to him. He has tasted of the sparkling cup of social intercourse. He has known the pleasantness of its smiles and its friendliness. He has felt the delight of possessing the magic password: the proud joy of the initiated has been his. He knows, therefore, as the uninitiated cannot know, the intolerable pain with which society can wound. He knows

and dreads its averted countenance. He can understand the meaning of the joyless exile to which it dooms the man against whom it has pronounced sentence of exclusion. The penalty of social ostracism is nothing to Simon Peter, who had never passed as an honoured guest within the sacred circle. It is a pain like death to Saul of Tarsus, who has lived in its midst. It is a loss only in imagination to Matthew, the publican. It is a real, bitter, unquestionable loss to a man like Nicodemus. To him it would mean the closing of those doors of society through which he had passed as an honoured and welcome guest, the coldness of friends, and the mean insolence of the parasites, who would now seek to make social capital by heaping insult on the man upon whom they had formerly fawned.

His knowledge of life and society would tell Nicodemus what awaited him, if he forsook the path of conventional religion and conduct. His natural timidity would even exaggerate these dangers ; for timidity is quick in imagining evils. It is easy to ridicule the fanciful fears of nervous and timorous people. Even when these fears are foolish, the agony of their presence is great and real. But the fears of Nicodemus were no imaginary fears. The people with whom he had to do were hard and cruel when their wills were thwarted or their prejudices

were offended. Their anger and resentment was the fierce wrath of wounded pride and panic-stricken orthodoxy. The man who thought differently from themselves, or dared to take an independent line, was unpatriotic and heretical, a degenerate son of Jerusalem, fit to be flung away as an outcast weighted with the curses of God and of his people. Such was the prospect which experience and fear would place before this timid, thoughtful, and cultivated man, now no longer in the vigour of youth.

We might without difficulty forecast the future of such a man if no higher influence crossed his path. For him the only course would be an acquiescence in things as they were. He would yield a general and silent assent to the usages and beliefs of his day. Publicly he would conform; in private he would fall into the habit of a delicate cynicism. He would point out the usefulness of certain beliefs, while suggesting at the same time their baselessness or even their untruthfulness. There would be in his speech that painful irony of tone which suggests the want of harmony between the real and the official self. While he might outwardly support the existing order of things, inwardly his faith would have fallen away from him, or else, as one goaded by the pricks within, he would have sought to vindicate his orthodoxy by becoming conspicuous among those who

sought to crush with pains and penalties and threatenings of death every movement which indicated freedom of thought or spiritual independence.

He might have become all this, but Christ came across his path, and, fascinated in a way he could perhaps have hardly explained, he sought Jesus by night. Once he came within the near range of that influence the current of his life was changed.

What was the method of Christ with Nicodemus ?

Our Lord varied His methods according to the characters of men. He captured Matthew's heart by an assault, long prepared for but sudden at the end. He surprised Nathanael as a conqueror who overcame his foe by an ambush. In the case of Nicodemus, His method resembles a siege, patiently and deliberately conducted.

In the conversation which took place, Nicodemus starts the subject of miracles. This, no doubt, was the topic of conversation at Jerusalem. Christ had made His personality felt by His act of cleansing the Temple. The right to act in this way would no doubt be challenged. The miracles which Christ had wrought would be put forward in defence of His authority to act as He had done. The topic of Christ's miracles had probably, therefore, been much discussed ; and with this topic Nicodemus opened the conversation. His own mind, indeed, is more

interested in Christ's teaching ; but he makes the question of miracles the stepping-stone to the question of what our Lord taught. For our Lord had taught that, were this temple destroyed, He would rear a temple in three days. His words had not been understood ; but they afforded subject for thought. What was this temple which He would raise so quickly ? Was He speaking figuratively of the kingdom of God, for which all were looking ? If so, what about the ecclesiastical dominion which the Pharisees sought, or the foreign yoke with which the Herodians were content ? What did the kingdom and the temple of God mean ?

Christ takes up the thoughts of Nicodemus. The kingdom is spiritual ; the temple is spiritual. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. It is a spiritual kingdom, and it is spiritually discerned. The temple of God is that which every man may be, when he is born of the Spirit, and the Spirit dwells in him of a truth. The enjoyment of this kingdom does not therefore depend on birth, or descent, or blood. It rests not on the will of the flesh, nor on the will of man, but on God (John i. 13). It belongs not to the order of things seen. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit" (John iii. 6). For the perception of the spiritual

kingdom a renewed spiritual capacity is needed. There is mystery in this, as there is in the beginning of all things; but the facts and results are clear, even though the origin of facts may be lost in mystery. There were those who had been quickened to perceive the spiritual and to love the spiritual life. Such facts were within experience. The experience is common enough, so much so that it may be spoken of as among earthly things (John iii. 12). But the source of these changes is divine. The power to create anew is of God.

The teacher of Israel might well have known that a spiritual power was needed to discern spiritual things. He might well have understood that there are many things which are true to our experience, though we are not capable of tracing them to their origin (John iii. 8-10). It needs the divine to make clear the divine (John iii. 13). And the divine reveals itself in suffering; the Son of Man must be lifted up (John iii. 14). Then men will be drawn by the realisation and the revelation of the divine, when suffering is seen to be the manifestation of Eternal Love (John iii. 16). When this is understood, then love is seen to be the key; and, if so, love ought to be the motive of all. When men are rooted and grounded in love they are able to comprehend (Eph. iii. 17, 18). The power of spiritual

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discernment is not in keenness of intellect, nor in any bestowal of a fresh faculty, but in the quickening of the spirit by the great power of the love which is of God.

The whole question of the discernment of the kingdom thus becomes an ethical and spiritual one. It is not a material kingdom ; it has no outward pomp. It does not appeal to the eye of the flesh. It must be spiritually perceived. Men fail to perceive it because they love darkness rather than light. The good, simple heart of love, awake and alive to God, needs no concealment and courts no darkness. The path of revelation is not closed to it. Its desire is purity ; it rejoices in the light. Beyond all else, it longs to be with God and to be like God.

Thus, with words that carry a gentle warning against the cowardly spirit which avoids the light and courts the darkness, Christ closes a conversation which, commencing with the question of physical wonders, ends in the declaration of the life, the light, and the love of God. He has shown Nicodemus that the establishment of the spiritual kingdom will not be by material means, but by spiritual means, and through a love which will not surrender the light of holiness, but is ready to lay down life itself that it may prove the love which beats in the heart of God towards man.

NICODEMUS

Nicodemus passes for the moment from our view. He leaves Christ. No answer of his is recorded. He passes in silence out into the night to find his way back to his house and to the routine life of his calling. We feel that it is unsatisfactory compared with the clear and recorded result of Christ's interviews with Matthew and Nathanael. There we were present at the struggle ; and we saw the victory. Now we listen to the conversation ; and the end is not shown to us. But the process of a siege is slow. The springing of the seed to harvest needs long patience. Men of the type of Nicodemus do not rush to conclusions ; the words spoken must sink down into their hearts. The seed will germinate, and the harvest be reaped at the fitting season. Christ Himself said that there were stages of spiritual growth. First the blade, then the ear ; after that the full corn in the ear.

We can trace the stages in the later life of Nicodemus. We turn to that time when the rulers sent to arrest our Lord, and the messengers returned empty-handed. The anger of the rulers was boundless ; they were eager to condemn without investigation any one and every one who favoured our Lord. Then Nicodemus exposed himself to their angry insolence by a remonstrance based on law and right (John vii. 50). "Doth our law judge a man,"

he asked, "except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?" It is true that the remonstrance is directed to a question of abstract justice ; but there trembles in the words the attachment of one who honours and reverences Christ. The blade has sprung up.

We come to a still later time. The fatal hour is passed ; Jesus Christ has been crucified. The sorrowing disciples are scattered and discomfited. The women and the few faithful ones come with their last offering of love to the tomb ; and among the faithful comes Nicodemus, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes a hundred pounds weight. It is an act of homage and devotion. It is the time when the ear has sprung up.

We can easily believe that the full corn in the ear was seen at the last ; and we can accept the tradition that afterwards he avowed himself as a believer in Christ, and received baptism from Peter and John. The further tradition that his acknowledgment of our Lord led to his persecution and exile from office and reputation would almost naturally follow the former.

But it is enough that we have seen again Christ's power and influence over men. We have seen Him in patient converse with Nicodemus ; and we have seen also that slowly the spirit of devotion grew, prompting Nicodemus to words of remonstrance, and

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at last to a brave act of devotion at the tomb of the crucified Christ.

It cost Nicodemus much to do these things. With his temperament, timid and cultivated, the effort to stand alone needed no small resolution, and evinced a courageous victory over self. To this the influence of Christ nerved him. Christ gave manhood and courage to a nervous and timid man. Under His influence he is able to take his place with growing force and dignity. The man who sought Him by night is at last enabled to rebuke unrighteousness, and to join himself with the despised and lonely followers of Christ.

Christ can give courage to the weak and fearful. This may seem a small thing ; but nothing is small which enables a man to enter into the full possession of his manhood. In one way or another this defect of life clings to us—that we do not possess our own lives. Passion, greed, ambition may rob us of this heritage ; but we are none the less deprived of it when we are the slaves of weakness and fear. To tame passion and to curb desire is a victory ; but that also is a victorious power which can banish fear, and transform weakness into resolution, and timidity into courage. For the fears which haunt timid souls are real and mighty powers. In their way they are not less powerful than covetousness

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and lust. They touch and wither up the lives of a vast number of men. Christ, if He is to be the Saviour of all men, must have a message of hope and redemption for the fearful. The story of Nicodemus assures us that He is the Saviour of the doubtful and timid. To those who have no might He increaseth strength. His hand—His pierced hand can grasp ours and encourage us against our weakness. Over natural timidity and social fears we can be made more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

THE SICK OF THE PALSY

*" And Jesus seeing their faith, saith unto the sick of the
palsy, Son, be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee "*

MATT. ix. 2

THE SICK OF THE PALSY

THERE is a truthfulness and a vitality in the Gospel narratives. As we read we feel that the scenes of life portrayed are scenes of life as we know it. The world of our Lord's day is peopled with folk who act just as the men and women of our own day act. There may be characteristic national differences, but the natural humanity remains the same. Its truthfulness rebukes our exaggerated views with the same calm impartiality with which real life rebukes our passionate denunciations of the world.

There are times in which we can find no words strong enough to express our sense of the coldness or unkindness of the world. In our disappointment over some real or fancied wrong or neglect, we wax wrathfully eloquent on the hard-heartedness of men. But the wheel of life rolls on; things change, and we find ourselves celebrating the tender and widespread kindness of our

fellows. For we have had sorrow, and in the time of our trouble or suffering we met another experience, the kindness of the world. We were surprised to find what a wealth of kindness and unselfishness there is in the world. We were ill, and we found kind hearts, and ready hands offering various and tender ministries.

Looking back upon our experience, we are almost reconciled to the trouble and suffering which revealed to us such kindness and sympathy. We have found that there are well-springs of goodness hidden below the unpromising soil. Sorrow, like the rod of Moses, has smitten the rock, and waters of comfort have flowed forth for the thirsty and dispirited. We begin to believe that the rule of the world is not hardness and indifference; we grasp new possibilities. Behind the stern and hard face of things goodness may yet dwell; and love may be guiding all.

Human kindness does more for the heart of man than just show it that there are kind people in the world. It wakens a larger confidence than the confidence in some few men and women; it suggests that such kindness on earth may have its root in a love which is elsewhere. Like a wandering sunbeam, which creeps into a sick man's room and tells him that the sun shines brightly out-

side, human kindness does more than brighten the lonely lot of sorrow, it witnesses to a love whence every kindness springs. Human kindness may be a revelation of the divine.

The story before us is a story of trouble in the presence of human and divine kindness. The man sick of the palsy is presented to us in the narrative as helped by the love of his fellow-men, and by the love which is greater than that of man. The interest lies in this, that we can compare the human and the divine kindness ; and in doing so we can see how the divine love always seeks the highest good of those whom it helps. It educates, while it assists. We have these two—human kindness and divine kindness.

There is the kindness of men, with its qualities and its limits.

These neighbours of the paralytic felt for him. They possessed the sentiment of kindness. He was suffering from an affliction which had its peculiar trial. Bodily pain is hard to bear, but there are things which are perhaps worse than mere physical pain. This man did not experience much actual pain, I imagine ; but he felt the perpetual shame of helplessness. He was paralysed ; he depended almost entirely on others. We sometimes forget how hard this helplessness is to bear. In the heart

of most men there is a conviction that the power to work and to be of service to their kind is a noble and blessed thing. It is true that there are idlers, ready for any excuse to shirk work. The unreal and artificial conditions of life as we know it may have contributed to this result ; but it may, I think, be taken for granted that most men feel helplessness to be a kind of reproach, and the necessity of being dependent upon others is reckoned a hard one.

With this man the consciousness of dependence upon others must have been always present. His powers of mind were unimpaired ; he was alive to the feebleness of his condition ; he was a poor and helpless creature, so stricken in body that he must rely upon the thoughtfulness and kindness of others for the supply of his simplest wants. He did not rely in vain. His neighbours felt for him. The sentiment of kindness was theirs. We sometimes despise, or affect to despise, sentiment. It is a mistake. Sentiment is but responsiveness of feeling to the appeals of things about us. To be destitute of sentiment is to possess a crippled humanity : to see sorrow and not to be touched by it ; to see want, and to feel no desire to relieve it ; to see suffering, and to experience no pang of heart, is to be destitute of the rudimentary powers

of benevolence out of which the stateliest philanthropies have arisen.

It is not well to crush down sentiment as unworthy, but it is well to guard against sentimentalism. For sentimentalism is the indulgence of unfruitful emotions. Sentiment which leads to no active kindness becomes the barren thing fitly called sentimentalism. This is only mawkish emotion. It is worse than mawkish ; it is dangerous. For nothing is more injurious to the moral nature than to indulge the luxury of sentimental emotions without any attempt to translate such feelings into action. The tears which well out of the eyes of compassion are sweet and beautiful, when compassion moves forth to relieve the distress for which it feels. But if compassion sits still with tearful eyes, the tears may freeze, and the eyes of compassion be blinded.

Misused emotions tend to chill and harden the heart ; kind actions should inevitably result from the experience of kind sentiments. The kindness of the neighbours was of this sort towards the paralytic. They not only felt for him ; they tried to give practical effect to their compassion. They had heard of Christ's power ; they thought that if they could only lay their suffering neighbour at Christ's feet it might be well. They resolved to try ; they knew where Christ was to be found ;

they took up the paralytic to carry him into the Healer's presence. Their kindness was active.

Their kindness, however, went beyond this. It was courageous. There is a kindness which can get as far as a little practical help, but it is soon daunted. Difficulties appear, and its enthusiasm ebbs away. It can be kind, but there are limits to its kindness. It can do something, but it can dare little. It can give help, but it cannot go far in sacrificing itself for the purpose. It is not unfair to call such kindness half-hearted. It certainly is deficient in practical effectiveness. It may fail at the critical moment.

But the kindness of these neighbours was not of this lukewarm order. When difficulties arose they were ready to meet them. They bore their suffering neighbour to the spot where Christ was to be found. They discovered that the throng was too vast to admit of their reaching the immediate presence of the Prophet and Healer ; but into His presence the sick man must be brought if they were to secure for him the help he needed. They realised this, and they were not the men to turn back, or to be daunted by difficulties.

It is here that they begin to disclose another feature of their affection. Courage may not turn back, but courage may be bewildered by difficulties.

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The brave man may not be ready in resources, or clever in expedients. But when love stands behind courage, love will rouse the wit and find the way. It is not necessity alone which is the mother of invention. Love, too, is quick of wit; and men have wrought as much for love's sake as at the bidding of necessity. Those who have been content to lie down and die from sheer weariness and want have, for the sake of others, roused themselves and racked their brains, and devised the way of safety or success. Love is fertile in expedients. These men were courageous enough to face difficulties, but it was love which quickened their wits, and under its guidance they climbed to the summit of the house, and dug through the earthen roof, and lowered their friend down at the feet of Christ.

Such was the kindness of these men. It was a kindness instinct with ready feeling, active, courageous, and inventive.

But with all its good qualities, their kindness had limits. Good and wholesome as it was there was something it could not do. There was a border line which, with all their willingness, they could not pass. They could feel and think and plan for their friend; but they could not achieve for him the thing they most desired. They could not heal him.

It is here that we touch the deep pathos of life.

Love is greater in her wishes than in her powers. Love stands so often before the great impassable barrier, her eyes tearless with some great desire, beating her bleeding hands against the hard, unyielding rock. It is a picture of baffled kindness. We know it well. We have seen it in the sick-room. The dear one lies restless on the fevered bed: the doctor has said that slumber is more than all medicines. If he sleep, he shall do well. We enjoin silence on the household; we close the door; we thick-curtain the windows; we arrange the coverlet; we soothe the pillow; we pass a light, cool hand over the hot brow; we murmur the softest words; we listen for the regular breathing. How sweet it is to soothe the sufferer to rest! But even as we watch and hope, the restless movements begin—the nervous jerk of the frame, the flinging back of the bedclothes; and we know that the fever-fiend works havoc in the brain; the unbidden, mechanical activities of the mind refuse to let the life-giving sleep come.

“Sleep soft, beloved, we sometimes say,
Yet have no power to chase away
The dreams that through the eyelids creep.”

By the sick-bed Love learns the limits of her power. Or she learns it by the sea-shore, when the clouds are driven with wind and the great waves are rolling

on the beach. We strain our eyes through the gloom and the wind, and now and again we catch a glimpse of the trembling masts of the doomed ship, with the dark figures clinging to the rigging. The life-saving apparatus has not come, or it will not work. No lifeboat can put out in such a sea. One by one we see the dark figures drop into the deep. Each one means a thinking, loving life. We reach vain hands across the foam ; but the barrier is set and we cannot pass over it. Here too, Love learns the limits of her power.

We need not go to the sea-shore or the sick-room for the lesson. It meets us in the quiet and seemingly untroubled epochs of life. We would shield our young ones from harm and danger. They grow up ; they begin to take their lives in their own hands ; we can control them no more. We can only advise or expostulate ; and we know that counsel is but a doubtful good at such times. We slowly become aware that we, too, are like those who are compelled to stand on the shore and see inexperience, pride, and self-will handling its little boat with doubtful and indocile art upon a dangerous sea. Love is learning here, perhaps more bitterly than in the sick-room or by the stormy sea, the limits of her power.

These are the pathetic moments of life, when we

long to help and we are compelled to remain inactive. Help lies beyond our power. We can neither soothe nor succour our dear ones ; they are outside our reach. We can but leave them in the hands of God. But they *are* in the hands of God. Here at the extremity of our power we touch the unfailing power. When our love can do no more, God's love can do more than all. The impassable barrier against which our love beats in vain, is the footstool of God's throne. The discovery of the limits of our love's power is the discovery of the great power of God's love. From the narrower borders within which human kindness can act, we turn to the boundlessness of the divine kindness.

Human kindness, then, whatever may be its desires, is limited. There are boundaries beyond which it cannot pass and depths into which it cannot pierce. But all things lie open to the divine light, and the divine love can pass freely into all realms. It can read the story of inward trials ; it can track its way through the moral intricacies which have baffled human insight, and it can carry the message of its discerning, tender, and truthful sympathy into the unexplored regions of the soul. It is with a love of this order that Christ deals with the suffering man. He shows a kindness which is discerning, tender, and truthful.

Our Lord first shows that His kindness is a kindness which understands the man.

The real limit of our power often lies in the fact that we do not fully understand one another. We cannot do more than reach the surface ; we cannot penetrate to the heart of one another's sorrows. These friends of the sick man knew him as one who needed bodily health ; they wished to help their neighbour ; they would be glad to see him about again, strong and well. But they did not realise the heart-pain and the inward sickness. But Christ read it all. He understood ; and, understanding, He spoke words which showed that He understood. "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

The words must have sounded strange in the ears of the men who had brought their sick friend to Christ. We can picture them leaning over the broken edge of the roof-hole, and gazing down at their friend and the Christ and the crowd that surrounded them. We can imagine with what eagerness they listened for the first words which the Prophet-healer would speak. We can feel that the words they heard must have sounded strangely and disappointingly irrelevant. "Thy sins be forgiven thee !" It was not for this that they had brought their friend. They had looked for a miracle of healing. It was strength and health which were wanted ; and for these

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they brought him. They are bewildered and disappointed.

But meanwhile Christ is reading the man's soul and the man's life. There are, it has been said, clean wounds and unclean ones in our lives. A sorrow, a sickness, a loss, which smites never so hardly upon us, but brings with it no touch of self-reproach or remorse, is a clean wound. There is no added element of sorrow besides the blow itself. But when we can see in the sorrow some reason of bitter self-blame, it is as though the blow fell on an unhealthy body. These memories of remorse give festering lips to the wound. Such are the unclean wounds of life.

For most of us the wounds of life are seldom wholly clean. Evermore the self-reproach, or the inevitable self-accusation mingles with our trouble. There is poison in most of the wounds from which we suffer. We cannot always tell others of the poison which yet we know is lodged in the wound; and yet here we need, perhaps, the greatest sympathy; and here we lie outside our brother's reach. But here the divine wisdom meets our need. "Thy sins be forgiven thee." It is like a healing touch, cleaning the edges of the wound. We can enter into the significance of the message which the words carried to this palsied man's heart.

In the eyes of man he was a sufferer ; but in his own eyes he was a guilty sufferer. The illness from which he suffered did not bring him so much active pain as utter weariness and intolerable strengthlessness. The body was weak and impotent, but the mind was clear enough to go back upon the past, and to realise the link between past and present. There had been a time when he was not this strengthless and humiliated thing. He had been young and strong, and the blood of his youth was in his veins ; he could live and enjoy life, and why should he not take the pleasures that met him by the way ? He could remember now that life of unrestrained delight, and he could remember that later period, when the joy of indulgence grew less, but the necessity for it more ; when he seemed no longer able to think and choose, for he was passion-driven. Joyless desire drove the wheel of his being. His nerves gave way, and the fatal retribution of excess fell upon him, and he became the thing he was, weak, and humiliated in his painful dependence on others.

Then, in his weak and unoccupied hours memory would be busy, and memory brought up her myriad arrows of reproach. It was folly to fling away his manhood, and to squander the free-given blessings of strength and health. It was sin to stain and ruin such priceless gifts. The sense of that sin was

strong within him. He knew this inward bitterness, and more than bodily health he longed for restoration of soul. The friends who pitied him, and ministered to him, were in part misplacing their pity; they pitied the powerless limbs and the trembling frame; they knew nothing of the stricken and suffering spirit. They could not minister to the mind diseased, or banish the pang of the heart. But Christ saw and understood, and by His first words He sought to remove the heaviest burden of the man's life. "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Such is the discerning quality of the divine love.

It is tender also.

The gift of knowledge is not the same as the gift of sympathy. It is not every discerning person who is tender-hearted also. When we know the story of a brother's weakness we cannot always keep back the bitter and cutting word. It is well, perhaps, that human kindness is often ignorant, for knowledge often breaks down its kindness. Certainly we often hear the phrase, "It serves him right." When we know that a man's suffering has been the result of his own folly and sin, we can seldom refrain from the pleasure of telling him so. He knows it well enough, God help him. It does not need our tongues to ring into his ears what his heart and his conscience are telling him in persistent and clear-sounding tones.

There is no need to tell the sufferer this, but there is a strange desire on our part to do this superfluous unkindness. The sufferer and the sinner will be sure to hear trite proverbs quoted. The girl who can hardly bear to think of the past, the man whose memory kindles an inward hell, will be sure to hear something most wise and most torturing when once their secret is known. Do we wonder that the wounded creature flies to hide itself, when people are so ready to tear open the wounds? The reproaches come. "You have made your bed, and you must lie upon it," and the soul pierced by memory is stabbed anew with words. Thus reproach is added to self-reproach. The stricken one is nagged at, and driven to desperation. There is too often little exhibition of tender-heartedness when all the truth is known. But with Christ, who knew all, there is the utterest tenderness. He knew all the sin and all the shame; and yet His first word forbids that the man should deem himself wholly outcast from love; "*Son*," says Jesus Christ—*Son*, still *Son*, though the fault is so great, and the sin so grievous—"Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Such is the tenderness of Christ, which blends with His clear vision of the evil of life.

There is yet another feature in the divine kindness.

Besides being tender and clear-sighted, it is entirely truthful.

We in our weakness fall into extremes. We either nag at the unfortunates who have sinned, or we weakly treat them as merely unfortunate. We use language which evades the truth. We speak as though chance rather than choice fashioned human actions. We translate evil doings into accidents, to the deceiving of men's souls. We call sins mishaps. There was no such foolish and misleading phraseology on Christ's lips. If He speaks of the past to the man to whom the past is a burden, He speaks of it as touched with sin. "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Christ will not call men's wrong-doings other than they are—Sins. Full of tenderness as He is, He will not veil the truth. He honours man too much to play with falsehood as though man's conscience could be set at rest by a lie. He honours man too much to treat him as though the powers of thought and will and choice which God gave him were unreal.

Man has much to encounter ; he meets with difficulties, and he is born into environments which fetter his powers, and call for a constant exercise of wit, perseverance, and resolution ; but he is not the mere sport of things ; he is not so destitute of the reality of choice that the deeds he does at the

bidding of desire or self-indulgence should be called mishaps. The moral wrong he does is not mere ill-luck, for he possesses the knowledge of good and evil ; and the noblest thing about him is that he can take his life in hand and learn to govern himself. He is no reed shaken with the wind, no drift-wood beaten hither and thither as the waves or tides shall bid. He can erect himself above himself. And they are not honouring but degrading him who take from him the great prerogative of conscious moral responsibility, and speak of sins as mishaps. To do this is weak kindness, as well as bad philosophy.

Moreover, it is a vain and futile expedient. Man's memory and conscience may sleep for a time ; but these specious words which conceal the truth will not keep them sleeping for ever. Men may be afraid to face the truth, and to explore the dark chambers of the past ; but they cannot be persuaded that there are no ghostly memories, no bitter experiences, and no reasons of self-reproach shut up in those dark chambers. On the contrary, men live as in a haunted house. In the busy occupations of life they may give but little thought to this past ; but when the quiet night season and the leisure hours come, memory will open the closed doors, and the footfalls of the ghosts of the past are heard, and the

soul is filled with fear. It is vain to cry peace when there is no peace.

Christ will not deign to try such foolish expedients. He blesses men with truth. He acts as one who says to men, let us face the ghosts which haunt the abode. He takes the sin-haunted man by the hand, and leads him from room to room, opening the door of the most dreaded chamber of all. He does not call that which is real to man a mere illusion. He goes throughout the house. He lays the ghostly memories. "Thy sins be forgiven thee." The troubled man is at rest. The eyes of infinite purity have looked upon the wrong, and have condemned the sin. It has been seen in all its ugliness ; it has been recognised as ugly ; it has been sentenced. It has been condemned in the flesh. It has been forgiven. This is better than the specious ways of well-meaning falsehood. The worst has been looked upon, known, and pardoned. The soul can rest, because it has been dealt with in the ways of truth. The soul can say : "Thou hast set our misdeeds before Thee, and our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance," and at the same time, for the spiritual paradox is most true : "Thou hast put all our sins behind Thy back." They are blotted out like a cloud before the splendour of the divine light and love.

Such are some of the qualities of the divine kind-

ness. Quick to discern man's real needs, it is tender and truthful in dealing with them. When man's kindness cannot render us help, the divine love can give, and can give royally and lovingly, the help which is needed by every man.

The kindness of the best is always exposed to the criticism of idle and unreasoning prejudice. The sense of Christ's kindness would not be complete without some glimpse of the criticising and captious world. The men who do nothing to help their fellow-men are adepts at criticising those who are trying to help. The world is made up, the cynic might say, of the kindly and the critical—those who do something to help and those who find fault with everything that is done. There is a class of minds which can only carp. They appear in this scene in the form of the Pharisees of Jerusalem. They had their trite argument ready—who can forgive sins but God only? In our Lord's words they find blasphemy.

Christ's reply is the completion of the man's cure. He had restored the spirit; He now restores the body. The man who has been for so long a burden to society is to be rendered fit to do service to his fellow-men. He will now carry his own load and no longer add to the burdens of other men. "Take up thy bed and walk," He says to the sick man. The

fact that the man takes his place among his fellows as a living, free, and serviceable agent carries with it a proof that he is fit to do so. The outward life shall show the force of the inward life ; the benefit which he can bring as a restored being will be evidence of the inward transformation and emancipation which the Lord has bestowed. So the man passes from our view, carrying his bed, bearing away before them all the symbols of his weakness and of his past. He is a new man, going forth with restored powers and ennobled motives of service.

The application of the story is not far to seek. Christ is once more victorious among men. He stands before us giving new life and vigour to one whom sin has enfeebled. Sin has a paralysing power. Self-indulgence weakens the frame, lowers the self-respect, and chills the heart. It produces a lethargy of all the moral powers. Under its influence the spirit becomes self-absorbed, and the soul that revolves upon itself loses the benediction and stimulus which come to those who can take interest in others. To go out of self is to live ; to go into self is to die. Sin leads us into self. We become the victims of ourselves, the slaves of our passions, and we miss the blessing of thought for others. The string which is too much played on wears out ; its virtue withers ; and this is true, even where the

string is self or some passionate delight of self-pleasing. Sin paralyses. It creates its own bonds, and the whole nature is fettered, and man is as one who has no power to help himself.

Christ absolves. He loosens the bonds which sin has made. When we are most literally tied and bound with the chain of our sins, we need His pity and His power to loose us. We need freedom, and the strength to use our freedom. Both of these He can give. To the palsied man there come the two great words—"Thy sins be forgiven thee." "Take up thy bed and walk." The emancipation of the soul comes with the first. The power to take up life anew and to use the new-given freedom comes with the other. Christ is the Saviour of the weak, and of those the weakest of all are they who have been self-enfeebled, weakened by their own wrongdoing. It is just those who have experienced this power of Christ who have done so much to proclaim His emancipating power to the world. The men who have felt most fully the thralldom have been loudest in proclaiming the liberty wherewith Christ made them free. St. Paul, Augustine, and Luther have each in his way and in his turn shown how Christ can restore to use and service noble powers once fettered by sin. This is the victory of Christ to transform lives that have been useless to that

courage and that usefulness which are born of gratitude. The man who had been brought in before them all by the help of others went forth before them all walking alone, bearing his burden, in full and restored possession of the powers of his manhood.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

"I have need to be baptised of Thee"

MATT. iii. 14

JOHN THE BAPTIST

HE who is to be the saviour of mankind must be the saviour of the strong as well as the weak. In one sense the strong need a saviour even more than the weak ; for weakness brings with it a ready instinct to rely on some helper, while strength is allied with an independence which is disposed to ignore its own needs. The power of Christ among men is shown in this, that He not only drew to His side the sick, the weak, the weary, but that in His presence the strong recognised their need of Him. Thus it is an illustration of the greatness of Christ's power when we hear of one who was strong among the strong, the rock-like John the Baptist, declaring "I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me ? "

John is a strong man, but a stronger than he has come and taken him captive in the bonds of admiration and love.

And yet the work, measured by the probabilities

of the case, was not an easy one. Humanly speaking there were difficulties in the way of such a moral victory as this.

It may be well to measure these difficulties.

There were difficulties which one may describe as national.

"Humility," remarks Renan, "has never been a feature of strong Jewish minds." The strong Jewish mind apprehends the greatness of his race. The Jew sees what he deems to be the divine genius by which his history has been animated. His outlook upon the world is the outlook of one who believes himself destined to conquer: he is not to serve, but to rule. This very quality which bred great individuals gave rise to strong dissensions. There may be too many masters in a masterful race. The spirit of self-assertiveness may grow too strong; the revolt of Korah in the wilderness is an example. There have seldom been wanting men of strongly marked individuality in Jewish history; and there were very few gifted with greater strength than John the Baptist. In him the energetic national faith in the kingdom was a mighty and absorbing power. He was little likely to submit himself or his mission to the authority of another.

We must add to this national tendency the per-

sonal characteristics with which the Gospel narrative makes us familiar.

John the Baptist was a man whose natural independence of character was nursed in solitude. When he came among men he came with a simple directness of address, without the remotest symptom of that artifice or expert adroitness which is so quickly learned by those who have practised management in the world of men. Whatever others might do in abating their claims, modifying their methods, or rearranging their phraseology to suit men's tastes and win their adherence, John's simple and stalwart conviction led him straight on. He felt no fear ; he knew no wavering. With an unshrinking courage and self-possession he confronted all sorts and conditions of men. Soldiers, tax-gatherers, Pharisees, rulers, all felt his influence. To him they were all but men, and men bound to pay allegiance to the moral order of God's kingdom. A man so courageous and so independent is not likely to surrender his authority. All the features of his character suggest a tendency towards self-assertion. It would not be surprising to find him autocratic in his methods. "It might have been expected that a character so stubborn, a sort of Lamennais, always irritated, would have been passionate, and suffer

neither rivalry nor half adhesion." Without accepting this description which Renan gives, we may yet feel that a character like that of John the Baptist would not readily divide his influence with another or welcome a rival teacher.

Besides, there is the element of success to be reckoned with. Success tends to stiffen a man's self-appreciation, and to make him more intolerant of any movement or counsel which seems to threaten the prestige or precedency he has achieved. John's success had been conspicuous. There went out to him Jerusalem and all Judæa, and all the region about Jordan, and were baptised of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. He had seen the strong man tremble before his rebuke. He had brought to his feet the rude soldier and the trade-absorbed publican. He had made the Pharisee and Sadducee shrink under his rebuke. A man who has done such things, and who has tasted the joy of such power, does not usually or readily bend before the authority of another.

There is the question of age. A man may yield to the age and experience of one much older than himself; or an old man, when conscious of his own failing powers, may welcome the growing influence of some young and energetic spirit; but the spirit of rivalry is strong between men of almost equal

age. The difference of age between our Lord and John the Baptist was six months. John the Baptist was six months the elder. "We have scarcely an example," says Renan, "of the leader of a school receiving with eagerness his future successor." This is not strictly true. Clement welcomed Origen. Bourdaloue generously recognised the talents of Massillon, as at a later period Dr. A. Thomson recognised the powers of Chalmers. But in these cases the disparity of years was great. Is it easy for a man in the fulness of his strength and the zenith of his power to welcome one soon destined to succeed and to eclipse him?

There is lastly the question of difference of teaching and practice. John the Baptist was an ascetic. Our Lord was not. "John came neither eating nor drinking." "The Son of Man came eating and drinking" (Matt. xi. 18, 19). A difference such as this causes alienation and distrust. It would need large and unusual magnanimity in the strong and ardent ascetic of the wilderness to give a cordial welcome to one whose life seemed mixed up with the interests of the world.

All these, then—national feeling, personal character, pride of seniority, tenacity of office, theological prepossession—rendered it unlikely that the elder would yield to the younger, the sterner character

to the milder, self-sufficiency to the One who was lowly in heart. Yet here is the phenomenon: the man, the unchallenged prophet, bold as a lion, courageous alike in words and deeds, blazing like a torch, strong as an eagle to swoop upon his prey; a man who reminds us of an Ambrose or a John Knox, not joyously strong, but gaunt, intrepid, severe, is like a child before Christ, yielding Him place, rejoicing in His success, and seeking His comfort.

The ascendancy which Christ won over the Baptist was complete.

Christ is the end of his teaching: "One mightier than I cometh, One who will baptise with fire."

Christ is the object of his devotion and his joy. The prophet of the wilderness falls into rapture. He is not naturally a character in whom ecstasy of this sort is likely to prevail; he is no weak personage gushing into admiration, but stern, strong, possessed of clear, robust, practical sense; and yet this man, so keen, so distinctly practical, breaks out into admiration, all the more striking because it seems to be unconscious and irresistible. He looked on Jesus as He walked, and said, perhaps even more to himself than to those about him, "Behold the Lamb of God." Such joy and rapture are not sentimental, but real.

The ascendancy is victorious over feeling ; for it is strong enough to destroy those germs out of which jealousy might have sprung. When his disciples, moved by a natural jealousy on the Baptist's behalf, brought him the news, "He that was with thee beyond Jordan, behold, He baptiseth, and all men come unto Him," the Baptist's answer was in effect, "Yes, you think that this will perhaps wound my pride, or stir some feeling of resentment, but I feel as one who joys in the joy of his friend." "The friend of the bridegroom," he said, "rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice ; this my joy, therefore, is fulfilled."

Again, this ascendancy is continuous. In this the completeness of Christ's victory is most remarkable. It was not a victory won over a man at some exceptional moment of emotion or weakness. It was no transient influence which Christ obtained. It was an influence which continued strong through the days of trial, as it had been in the time of activity and free energy. John was cast into prison. Solitude and inaction are terrible to a man of his disposition. Danger and difficulty serve to stimulate his powers and rouse his energy ; but to be alone, and to be denied the solace of active work, to watch the long hours go by, and to feel the restlessness which confinement generates in hearts passionately attached

to freedom and action, is to know a misery which tempts to despair. Then doubt, like a tempest, shakes his heart ; even the vision, which in the hour of his activity was so clear, grows dim ; he can read its meaning no more ; it has become indecipherable, like the inscription on a flag when it is ruffled by the wind. But in that hour the ascendancy of Christ held its sway ; for when doubt began to beset his soul he felt that in the strength of Christ there was a refuge.

Unlike his great prototype, Elijah, he does not pray in the hour of his loneliness, "Now, Lord, I beseech Thee, take away my life." But as a child he turns to his teacher for wisdom. In his trouble John sent messengers to inquire of Christ. He asked for reassurance from Him of whom, when all was insecure, he still felt sure. It is as though he said, "If any one can resolve my doubt He can." Therefore he put his misgivings into the message, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" The influence of Christ held firm in the hour of despair. Neither engrossing activity nor heart-trying anxiety could impair its force. The ascendancy of our Lord over the Baptist was early, full, and final ; it was a real, continuous, and abiding power, exercised over a man who was himself one of the strong and victorious spirits of his time.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

What, then, is the secret power by which Christ won this ascendancy? We are told this by the evangelist in a single word. It lies in the simple fact that John knew Jesus Christ.

But this knowledge was more than mere personal knowledge; it was spiritual recognition. The narrative of St. Luke does not make it certain that John the Baptist knew our Lord in early life. But, on the other hand, the kinship between them gives probability to the tradition which has been embodied in so many famous pictures. However this may be, the mere knowledge implied in the tradition is not complete knowledge; there is a deeper and a truer knowledge than this. There is a knowledge which touches life when inward affinities are disclosed, and when "spirit with spirit can meet." John's words are, "I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."

The words need not disturb or puzzle us, even if we suppose a previous personal acquaintance. In any early acquaintance there was not at first full recognition of all that our Lord was. The simple fact is that John knew that he was sent

to bear witness to One who was to baptise with the Holy Ghost. At first it was not given him to recognise our Lord as such, but when the Spirit fell on Jesus, then he knew; and then there dawned upon his mind something of the beauty of Christ's character, and of the splendour of Christ's mission. Then he saw in Christ what others did not see. One stood among the people whom they knew not; but John knew and perceived features of the glory which was veiled from others. He saw the beauty which the Scribe and Pharisee neither saw nor desired.

What were these features?

He recognised the purity of His humanity. "Behold," he said, "the Lamb." Whatever else may be signified in this phrase, and doubtless the phrase has many meanings, none can doubt but that the idea of the blamelessness and the spotlessness of Christ's character is suggested; the notion is drawn from the Paschal Lamb, the lamb which must be "without blemish and without spot." When, then, John the Baptist, looking with loving regard upon Christ as He walked, said, "Behold the Lamb of God" (whatever anticipations of sacrifice might pass through his mind), he seems at that moment to be chiefly occupied with the thought of the beauty and the purity of Christ's character. If

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John's knowledge of our Lord began in early life, then we must suppose that the unsullied character of Christ, known to the Baptist through so many years, at last forces upon the Baptist's mind the thought that this pure humanity was a revelation of something divine? But, in any case, John recognised the moral beauty and dignity of our Lord when he deems it fitting to describe Him as the Lamb of God.

He recognised His pure divinity. Think for a moment of that token of divine anointing of which John spoke. "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on Him, the same is He which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost and with fire." The advent of this divine anointing, the sign of the Spirit descending like a dove, came within the range of John's experience. Whatever the historical circumstances connected with this descent of the Spirit may have been, the ethical meaning surely is clear. John recognised in Christ more than the mere purity of a beautiful human character; he recognised the fire of that divine life which glowed within Him. He saw, too, that that fire was not a fire to glow unused upon the altar of Christ's manhood, but was destined to be a kindling fire setting aflame the hearts of men and purifying the order of the world. He was not only

anointed with the Holy Ghost, but He was destined to baptise the world with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Further, whatever the historical circumstances may have been, the spiritual thought is clear. Christ was recognised by the Baptist as having the established approval of heaven, as being closely and dearly related to the heavenly Father, as One whose work was blameless in the eyes of God, as His life was blameless towards the world. The voice from heaven was heard proclaiming, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus John recognised our Lord as coming with the favour and strength of God to achieve a great moral revolution, and to diffuse a nobler spirit in the world.

He recognised the work of Christ as one of suffering and love. He not only said, "Behold the Lamb of God," but he said, "the Lamb which taketh away the sin of the world." It is difficult to believe that the prophecy of Isaiah was not in his mind. If so, and we can hardly doubt it, the whole range of that wondrous prophecy is gathered up in the utterances of John the Baptist; and in his view Christ was "the servant of the Lord who was to see of the travail of his soul and was to be satisfied." He was One upon whose life was to fall

sorrow, and yet in whose sorrow the world was to find life. He was to accomplish the reconciliation which should make the world glad. He was to achieve that work which would inaugurate among men a new era of love and a noble principle of sacrifice.

If these three features, then, were recognised by John, let us note the effect of such a recognition.

First, there is the comparatively complete view which John must have had of Christ's person and work. To his mind Christ was pure, Christ was divine, Christ was to suffer, Christ was to reveal the sacrifice of love. The meekness and the gentleness of Christ were clear to his view, and in the meekness and gentleness of Christ there was a power which was greater than the powers of the world.

But, further, do we not trace what we may describe as a personal element in the view which John takes of Christ? Too often, in speaking of John as the precursor of our Lord, we think of him as, so to speak, impersonal. But it is not in accordance with our knowledge of human nature to think of any one after this fashion. John was a man of like passions with ourselves. He knew the stirrings of indignation, he knew the pleadings of tenderness, he knew the experience of depression. Strong as

he was, he had needs which were common to humanity. He needed encouragement of soul ; it was a yearning for this which prompted his message to Christ in the hour of his captivity. The incident expresses John's sense of personal need. But this sense of personal need, if I mistake not, expressed itself even earlier in history. When John was asked who and what he was, he answered, "I am the voice." In his mind there was running the prophecy of Isaiah, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord." Just as in the previous case, when he spoke of the "Lamb of God," the fifty-third of Isaiah was in his mind, so now, in speaking of the voice, the fortieth chapter of Isaiah is in his mind ; but this is the chapter which speaks of that divinely-sent messenger, who would "feed His flock like a shepherd and carry the lambs in His bosom." The two thoughts, then, of Christ being Himself the lamb, and yet being the shepherd who would care for the lambs in His flock, seem to hold equal place in John the Baptist's mind. He says, "I prepare the way, but I do so only by my voice. I have no power to gather to my embrace the weak and the needy, but One cometh after me who is mightier than I. He comes to baptise not only with fire, but with the strength of a tenderness which can help all the

world. I can but prepare His way, and, having prepared it, I must take my place among those who need His help." This sense of need he also expressed with loyal deference when he hesitated to receive Christ to his baptism. "I have need to be baptised of Thee," he said, "and comest Thou to me?"

John, then, mighty prophet as he was, realised his own need of help. His manhood cried out for a divine strength. Strong as he was, the weakness of humanity yearned for the refuge of God ; for he too was one of God's sheep in this naughty world, and he, like all who have sinned, needed to be folded by the Shepherd's hand.

It is in the realisation of this personal need of John that we shall best understand the secret of Christ's ascendancy. Doubtless he was drawn to Christ by admiration of His spotless purity ; doubtless he saw glimpses of the divine fire which rested upon Christ ; but the touching element of the story lies in the discovery that this man, who seemed to the eyes of the world no reed shaken by the wind, but a man immovable as a rock, invincible as an eagle, yet carried beneath the brave front which he bore before the world a heart tumultuous in its anxieties, capable of depression, conscious of weakness and longing for help. He, like the rest of us,

had seasons when he faltered and stretched forth lame hands of faith ; but in those hours when he stretched forth his hands for help he stretched them forth to Christ as to a natural refuge. In other words this strongest of men, this greatest among the sons of men, found the weighty and various needs of his nature satisfied in Jesus Christ.

Christ thus shows Himself the Saviour of the strong as well as the Saviour of the weak. In one point of view none among the sons of men can be reckoned as strong ; for all fade as a leaf. But in the human point of view men differ as the mountains and hills of the world differ. Some raise but gentle slopes towards heaven, others seem to stand as Teneriffe or Atlas unremoved, and John was one of these mighty ones. "The prophet of fire" we call him ; he stood where other men would shrink and fall. But the strongest need a Redeemer, and He who is to be a Redeemer of men must bring with Him a power which can meet the needs of these lofty and impregnable souls as well as the needs of the feeble. This is precisely what Christ did.

In His ascendancy over John we have the picture of the power which Christ exercises over the robust and mighty of the earth. Here was a man prominently fitted to stand alone—a man who at first

might be deemed independent of the assistance of inward or spiritual strength. Yet this man leans on Christ. He recognises Christ as his superior, not merely in the way in which a man might recognise another from a literary or intellectual point of view as his superior, but he recognises Christ as a very present help in trouble ; as One from whose life he can derive life ; as One who can solve his doubts ; as One who is the bridegroom of the spirits of men.

An ascendancy like this may rebuke the imagination of those who think that religion is all very well for the weak, but that the strong can stand alone. It is a mistake to suppose that the mighty men of the earth need no help from the power of faith. It is indeed true that for a while men may live without realising their need, but there are times in which the strongest are weak. If a man is noble he feels it when temptation is upon him ; if he is hopeful he feels it when failure is his portion ; if he is loving he will feel it in the hour of sorrow ; if he is hungering for righteousness he will feel it in the presence of sin ; and if not at such times as these, yet afterwards, when the joys of life decrease, and our powers of enjoyment grow feeble ; when success falls from our side ; or when even our pleasure in success dies into nothingness ; then,

when we are face to face with the remediless weakness of humanity we

“Stretch lame hands of faith, and grope
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what we feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.”

Something of this sort passed, I suppose, through John's mind in his prison at Machærus. He felt that the joy of life had vanished with his opportunity of activity, and, like so many from whose life sunlight had passed away, he found it hard to believe that the sun was shining anywhere.

“Art thou He who should come?” he asked, who had himself been the witness of the coming one. “Art thou He that should come?” he asked, who had declared so emphatically, “There cometh after me one whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose.” “Art thou He that should come?” he asked, as one who said, “Must we postpone our hopes? Must we still look to the future? Are the desires and yearnings of humanity to be for ever postponed?”

Doubt was in the question, and let none wonder that this man of energy and faith should doubt. The agony of doubt is often the portion of the highest faith. Job took the honest complaint of his spirit to

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God, and the love of God did not refuse him. So it proved with John. In his lone hour of doubt he turned to Christ, as naturally as Job in the hour of his doubt turned to God. And he did not turn in vain. Christ's answer was one well fitted to the character and disposition and faith of John. "Go tell John those things which ye do see and hear ; the blind receive their sight ; the lame walk ; the lepers are cleansed ; the dead are raised to life ; the poor have the gospel preached to them ; and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." In other words, "Go and report to John that God is still actively working in the world, that the needs of humanity are not forgotten, that the sorrows of humanity are consoled. Tell John that though there may be darkness in Machærus, and deep darkness in the heart of the captive there, yet God's sunlight of love is still shining in the world. Tell him that the faith which can only live in the sunlight is not the faith in which he himself once believed. Tell him that the joy of souls that are noble may be found in suffering. Tell him that the delay, and the seeming heedlessness of divine power is never a loveless or unwise delay. Blessed is he whose heart does not stumble because divine love does not act as selfishness or as despair may desire ; blessed is he who in darkness can trust the

divine wisdom of the divine love. Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me."

Such a message implied the highest trust in him to whom it was sent. It was a salutary message, for it carried comfort and invigoration. It did not merely console and soothe; it was calculated to stimulate and to inspire. It was just what the Baptist needed; it spoke to his manhood and to his faith. It was like the call of the officer on the field who bids his troops to stand in the hour of danger. It was the message, which, calling to courage and high trust, fell upon the captive's ear as the hour of his martyrdom drew nigh. He was to suffer as well as to serve; and his faith at the last is sustained by the message which assured him that God's love was not dead, and that patience as well as courage were needed in the discipline and education of faith. "Blessed is he who is not offended in Me."

We have seen, then, how complete was the ascendancy which Christ exercised over John the Baptist. That ascendancy was not the domination of mere authority, it was personal; it was the ascendancy of spirit over spirit; it was an ascendancy which was welcome because it was fitted to the needs of the Baptist's heart. It follows, then, that the story sets forth the word of Christ as fitted not

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only for the weary and the heavy laden, for the simple and for the sick, but also for mighty men and men robust in faith. Christ is not merely One who ministers to the weak ; He has a message and ministry for the great and the strong. He came to be the Saviour of mankind, and He embraced all in His love. He was Shepherd to the strong as well as to the feeble of the flock. The greatest can find in Him refuge and strength. He who in the judgment of divine wisdom was greater than Abraham and Moses, David and Solomon, Isaiah and Daniel, felt that neither his mission nor his character were complete without the baptism of the Spirit which dwelt in our Lord. He who was the greatest hitherto born of woman, bowed with his weight of care before the comfort of Christ, and sought, with full consciousness of his spiritual weakness, for the help of Christ, acknowledging, as all must who realise the spirit of Christ, "I have need to be baptised of Thee."

BARTIMÆUS

*" And they call the blind man, saying unto him,
' Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee ' "*

MARK X. 49

BARTIMÆUS

THERE are three powers which, interacting upon one another, work out the great drama of human life. There is the power within us, the power of self. There is the power without us, the power of the world. In proportion as we can make the power within operative on the power without we are successful. But above these two powers there is a third. It is the power of God over all. If the power of self, working in conjunction with the power of the world, brings about success or failure, the realisation of the power of God is the way to that best success, the success over ourselves and over the world, the victory of character.

The story of Bartimæus shows us a man in difficulties, and exhibits his conduct when face to face with these three powers of life. He is a man who has to meet his own weakness, for he is blind. Weak though he is, he has to confront the world. He has also to stand in the presence of divine

power. The interest of the story lies in the picture which it gives of man in the presence of those powers which most affect his life. We see him in the presence of earth and of heaven. We shall see what the world did for him, what he did for himself, and what divine love did for him; and in seeing these things we shall see a picture of life as it is for most men.

The world is the first power we shall think of in this case. The world has its powers, its limitations, and its moods.

The world has its powers. There is something which the world can do, and that something is what the world on the whole very readily does. The world can give its compassion to the needy, and the world is not slow to do so. Bartimæus found that this was the case. The blind man sat by the gate, and the crowd that swept in and out of the city was not composed of hard-hearted folk indifferent to the sufferings of their fellow-creatures. On the contrary, many compassionate glances were probably cast at the unfortunate man whose sightless eyes and outstretched hands appealed to their pity. But the world went beyond the phase of mere compassion. The world gave pity, but the world also gave practical evidence of its pity. The world gave its alms. The blind man, deprived of the means of

supporting himself, did not find that the world resented his inability as an affront to itself. He found that the compassion of men took practical form, and many a passer by dropped alms into the beggar's open palm. The world's powers reached as far as the bestowal of compassion and of alms.

But the world had its limitations. The one thing which the man most needed was the one thing which the world could not give. The world could not supply his real need, for his real need was sight. This is the world's limitation. It could give pity when Bartimæus wanted power. It could give alms when Bartimæus wanted eyes. The world seldom can reach the real needs of men. There are few things more grotesque or pathetic than the incongruity of the world's gifts in relation to human need. The gifts are beautiful and abundant, but then they are not what are wanted. The world gives the sumptuous marble to the men who have craved for bread. She can bestow honour, she can alleviate suffering, but she cannot heal or satisfy the soul.

The gifts which the world gave to Bartimæus, kind and well-intentioned as they were, were just those gifts which reminded him most keenly of his misfortune. In receiving the alms of men he felt his dependence. And to true manhood, alive with the instinct of work and independence, this sense of

helpless dependence is humiliating and hard to bear. But this is typical of the world's limitations of power. It can give toys and ribbons; it can soothe and console and support, but it cannot restore capacity or satisfy the real wants of man's nature. It offers gold to the sick man, whose real need is health; it offers ease and wealth to the soul that is thirsting for truth. Men in all ages have found out the world and its limitations. Like Severus, who had reached the supreme height of power, they have tried everything and found that everything was nought. Like Augustine, they have found that the heart which is made for greater things cannot rest in the lesser. Like Lacordaire, they have exclaimed with indignation and loathing, "I cannot leave my heart in this heap of mud." The world, great, kindly, and generous as it is, cannot satisfy the desire of the soul of one single unit of its many millioned population of human beings. Bartimæus found this; alms and pity could not restore to him the use and capacity of his manhood's powers.

The world, too, has its moods. The society in which we live is kindly and well-disposed. It is not hard-hearted, but it likes to help in its own way, and it is relentless in its opposition to those who strike out their own line. Society has its moods as well as its limitations. The story of Bartimæus illustrates

this, for it not only shows us what the world could do and what it could not do, but it also shows us what it did do. The action of the world in this respect may be described in one word—hindrance. It hindered the man in his attempt to realise his most cherished dreams. The one thing he wished was restored capacity, the power to guide and direct his energies and his life. He desired to be no longer a profitless and dependent creature, but to be restored to the possession of sight, and with it to that capacity for self-direction which is requisite for true life. The moment came when it was within his grasp. The Healer, the Prophet of Nazareth, endowed with the powers of restoration, was near. Bartimæus lifted up his voice in earnest appeal. But the moment he gives voice to his own wish, and ceases to be meekly acquiescent in the world's patronage, the world turns against him. The very society which gave him its compassion and its alms turns against him as a disturber of their peace, and treats him as an intruder in their midst. Society chided Bartimæus for his cry. "They rebuked him that he should hold his peace."

The picture is true to life. The world is intolerant of the best aspirations of men ; it resents the attitude of those who take a line of their own. The world has a way of stifling the utterance of the great and

unexpected voices which are lifted up in earnest desire or noble appeal.

Genius has found it so. The poet, like the prophet, finds little honour among his own folk. The trim and conventional faces of those about him look with anger or reproach upon the incipient genius who dares to dream of a career different from the counter or the office desk. We must not be too hard on such, for it is not every one whom society discourages who has the genuine gift of song; and a man is not necessarily a genius because his friends think him erratic and self-willed. But still the aspirations of true genius have often met with but a chilling reception in the world. The world has hindered, frowned upon, and too often clamoured down the man whose intellectual range was beyond the grasp of average dulness.

Philanthropy has found the same. The efforts of noble-hearted men to improve the condition of their fellow-men have been met with suspicion and assailed with misrepresentation. Even a Howard and a Wilberforce cannot escape detraction; and society has shouted against those who have cried aloud in the cause of humanity, and has bidden them to hold their peace.

The reformer has fared no better. Gideon must be suspected. David's patriot utterance will be re-

buked. There are always Eliabs to be found who chide the aspirations of young faith. And even Apostles proclaiming a nobler life and spiritual emancipation to society will be clamoured against as those "who turn the world upside down."

The world is kind enough in its own conventional way. It can hardly realise its own limitations. It resents the noble dissatisfaction of those who seek something loftier than the world can give. It suspects what it cannot understand. It hates because it fears what it suspects. It becomes through fear brutal and careless of the higher interests, and blind to the nobler instincts of humanity. Against the voices that cry for freedom, for enlarged capacity, and for the higher vision of manhood, it presents its dull and unsympathetic opposition. And it does so not from hardness or unkindness, but from ignorance and fear, from the dulness that has little sympathy with that noble discontent which desires to advance the welfare and ameliorate the condition of mankind.

The world likes to patronise those who are content with its patronage. It is intolerant of those who exhibit independence of judgment or conduct. This leads us to consider what the man Bartimæus did for himself.

There are two principles which are essential to

independent success. One is the principle of self-dependence, the other is that of single-mindedness. Bartimæus illustrates both these principles in his action.

He was self-reliant. He took his own course. He did not easily abandon his purpose because of the clamour of the crowd. They bade him hold his peace, but he, realising how little he could depend on their good offices, called so much the more—"Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." This is a lesson which life soon teaches us. In our early days of inexperience we are tempted to count much on the help of others. Men begin life by hoping much from their patrons. They know men who have influence ; they look forward to an easy grasp upon the object of their desires. But they soon unlearn this delusion. Like Dr. Johnson they discover that too often the office of patron is to leave the struggling man unassisted, and to encumber him with help when he no longer stands in need of it. Men soon discover that their own best patron is their self-reliance. They learn to expect little. They learn as little to rely on, as to be daunted by, the cries of the crowd.

It is this quality which Bartimæus displays. He is heedless of the crowd ; but it is not the heedlessness of a coarse and indifferent nature. It is

the heedlessness of a man who knows what he wants, and who has the courage to dare all to secure it. There is an ignoble heedlessness which betrays a blunted and unsympathetic nature. There is a noble heedlessness which is born of earnestness. The man who has it is neither daunted by fear nor enervated by self-consciousness. It is the quality of soul which Wellington displayed when he planted himself on the heights of Torres Vedras, and held to his choice in spite of the clamour, abuse, and accusations of home ignorance. He knew what he was doing, and he was in earnest. He was not to be turned aside from his purpose because of the empty chatter of impatient and inexperienced criticism.

Earnestness does not depart from its path because it is misunderstood. St. Paul will not cease to preach because Festus says that much learning has made him mad. Our Lord did not suspend His work because His friends said that He was beside Himself. The fire of earnestness is not quenched by the damping discouragement of unappreciative criticism. Clamour cannot silence the voice within the heart of him who knows what he seeks. When dogs bark wise men walk on. The object in view is worth the cost of some inconvenience and much discouragement. The words of the man in earnest are—

"I am not one who list
His anchor to let fall
For every drizzling mist;
My ship's substantial."

The only answer to difficulty given by such a man is the redoubling of his efforts. The more opposition, the more endeavour; the more clamour, the more determination. Such was Bartimæus's answer to the daunting and discouraging crowd. The more they cried, so much the more he lifted up his voice pleading for the boon he craved.

But for success there is another principle no less needed than self-reliance. It is single-mindedness.

Self-reliance alone may miss the mark. It can easily degenerate into self-conceit; and self-conceit is too often content with imaginary victories, and scorns the trouble which is needful to secure success. The companion virtue of self-reliance ought to be single-mindedness. Single-mindedness seeks, by concentration of all the attention and all the powers upon one thing, to secure the end in view. It is the spirit which will not be turned aside or seduced. It knows that some sacrifice is needed, and it is ready to pay the price. It compels the attention of the whole mind to the thing in hand. It draws all interest to this one thing. It is content to fling out of the way everything that

stands in its path. It will cast overboard the most precious freightage in order to reach its harbour successfully.

This spirit also Bartimæus displays. It is necessary for him to reach Christ. He must run no risk of failure. The long robe about him was useful enough as he sat by the gate of the city the whole day through. But it might prove a hindrance to his advancing footsteps. There is no hesitation in his action. If there is any chance of its being in his way it must be sacrificed. He flings aside his robe, and so, unimpeded, advances towards the Lord.

This is the spirit of single-mindedness. It perceives the goal; it casts aside every hindrance. The soul is absorbed in one object; all other things are insignificant. The action of Bartimæus is the very opposite to that of the rich young ruler whose story is told in the same chapter. He too, like Bartimæus, was drawing near to Christ; but while Bartimæus cast aside his garment, the wealthy man held to his riches though they were as an encumbering robe which entangled and hindered his advancing feet. He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

To be without the single-minded spirit is to court failure. To possess it is to bring success within reach. It is indispensable in life.

Greatness possesses the courage which can sacrifice what may be useful, when it may also prove a temptation or an encumbrance to its advancing march. Cæsar knows when to burn his boats. Industry knows that many a social pleasure and many an hour of relaxation must ruthlessly be sacrificed if ultimate victory is to be achieved. Like Lord Eldon, it knows that the way to success is to live like a hermit and work like a horse ! The message of successful lives is the lesson of a single-minded devotion to the object in view.

That which is the counsel of successful lives is the command of religion. For the sake of the higher life the encumbrances of the lower must be laid aside. The garments of the old life must be left behind. This is the Apostle's thought—"This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, I press forward." The voice of an earlier writer enforced the same thought, and told one to whom the possibilities of a new life and enlarged influence were opening up that the condition of success lay in leaving old interests and old affections far behind—"Hearken, O daughter, and consider and incline thine ear, forget also thine own people and thy father's house." In the same strain the writer, who sought to console his countrymen when they saw the old and loved

régime crumbling around them, pointed them forward to the Christ who went before, and counselled them: "Wherefore, laying aside every weight and sin which doth so easily beset us, let us run with patience the race which is set before us."

When the soul is filled with one strong passion, such single-mindedness becomes easy. To Bartimæus it was as nothing to cast aside his robe. He thirsted for sight. What was raiment compared with such a dowry? To those who thirst for the vision of God no sacrifice seems too great. Indeed, it is only those who are possessed of a spirit ready to sacrifice all who can behold that light. It is only if our eye be single that our whole body is full of light.

But the best human efforts cannot achieve everything. We touch this side of the story when we notice what Christ did for him.

When we have spoken of self-reliance and single mindedness, we have not said the last word about success. As far as temporal life is a conflict with the world these two are indispensable factors of success. But there are ranges of life which lie outside the compelling forces of energy and self-denial. Beyond the world and the man, there lie the universe and God. Beyond the regions which determination and devoted industry can rule, there is the

realm of poetry and religion. There are things which lie outside the grasp of the most determined self-reliance and the most persistent self-denial. Inspiration, which refuses the most earnest prayers, and rejects the most precious sacrifices of industrious talent, whispers her songs unsought into the hearts of apparently idle men. The notes which all the world pause to hear have been often struck by men who have spent their days lying on their backs beneath the trees, and watching the blue sky through the latticed foliage over their heads. Nature sometimes denies gifts to those who toil for them, and perversely seems to give them all unsought.

The reason is plain. Self-reliance and self-denial are not all life; these qualities do not make the complete man. Life is not merely energy, industry, achievement. There is place for repose and worship as well as for zealous activity. Man is not merely a busy, achieving sort of creature; he is a receptive being also.

We know this well enough, for we classify men on the basis of this very principle. It is seen in the contrast so often set up between talent and genius. Talent involves energy, concentration, industry, the vigilant exercise of studied self-denial. What it produces bears the forge-marks on it. It smells of the midnight oil. But what genius brings forth has

upon it the mark of naturalness ; it is, or seems to be, effortless ; it is inevitable in its quality. The one is the work of the artisan ; the other that of the artist. The artisan laboriously combines, constructs, achieves ; the artist drinks in from every source. He lies open to nature's impressions ; he possesses a greater power of receptivity. He sings inevitably because nature sings within him. Like the prophet, he is the voice of something greater than himself. Where talent needs self-assertion, genius begins with a duteous waiting on nature, a watchful, receptive, almost dependent habit of mind. The lesson of talent is action ; but there is a lesson of dependence also which we need to learn.

The story of Bartimæus sets this before us. The man in the presence of the world is one scene in the story ; and in it we see how needful and forceful are the powers of self-reliance and self-denial. In his self-assertion against the clamour of the world, he is courageous and independent. But man and the world are not the only factors of life. Above and beyond them there is the great power of the love which encompasses all. Self-assertion works well against the world ; but in the presence of Him who is greater than the world, the spirit of self-assertion drops away. All that we have is given us from Him. How can we assert ourselves any more ? It is thus that Bar-

timæus stands before Christ. And as he does so his whole demeanour is changed. He is no longer the strong and stout pleader of his own cause and his own need. Jesus commanded him to be brought ; and when he stands before Christ he is silent till Christ speaks. He stands as one who waits. It is right that it should be so. What he needs must be waited for from the hands of love.

There are gifts which come only to waiting souls. Those who believe that by energy and effort they can appropriate to themselves all that they need miss the deeper side of life. The voices which speak in such ears are voices full of the brief and shallow clamour of the competing world. There are gifts which come only to those who wait in silence till the sweet and eternal voices begin to speak. For such souls there are voices in the silence. One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another ; there is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them. There are utterances which are open to all the world, which only they hear who wait to hear—

“Celestial harmonies then only heard
When the heart listens.”

This calm and trustful attitude of mind has a kind of natural devoutness in it. It recognises a source

of inspiration greater than itself. Great men of different faiths and different ages have realised this. Avicenna found his subtlest syllogisms given him after meditation and worship. Haydn prayed before he composed. Many a man of genius can truly say of some of his best works—"They were given to me." The waiting and receptive attitude of mind, so helpful for all creative work in the intellectual world, is essential to the religious life; for in this realm there are blessings which no energy can grasp, and no talent or industry can secure. Proud determination and self-assertive vigour go empty away; while the highest and richest gift which can bless the soul of man is vouchsafed to the lowly and contrite spirit. The blessings of heaven are for waiting men. Inspirations are for men who can and will wait upon God.

In the Albert Memorial Chapel at Windsor one of the most suggestive pictures on the walls exhibits this aspect of the soul waiting for God's gift. David and the harpists of Israel are represented with their instruments in their hands. Their fingers hang listless upon the strings. Their heads are bowed. All the appliances of their art are in their grasp, but the divine gift is not yet. They are waiting for the inspiration from on high. So Bartimæus, the man of energy and self-assertion,

waits before Christ for the gift which his force and his determination cannot seize, which must be given as love's free gift. The man of independence is to learn dependence. He waits till Christ asks, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" The boon must be given and received—given by love and received by love. And thus he who was so self-reliant towards the world may learn the sweetness and the calm restfulness of reliance upon one greater, mightier, more loving than himself.

The scene in which man and the world are actors is a scene of independence; the scene in which the man and the divine helper are the actors is one of dependence.

To say that our Lord showed love to the blind man, is to say what is true enough and obvious enough; but it does not help us to the full appreciation of Christ's personal dealing with Bartimæus. We use the word love in a general and vague way. We often forget that love involves the exercise of tender and discriminating kindness towards others. It is in the quality of the action in relation to those whom we help that the lovingness of our love reveals itself. Christ acted towards Bartimæus with love; but it was with a love which displayed sensibility, decision, judgment, and capability. In other words, His action showed much more than a vague and

limp benevolence. His love was ever exerted with an everlasting moral influence upon those whom He helped.

There was sensibility. Our benevolent intentions and dispositions are not always quick of perception. They are often dull, lethargic, and spiritless. Charity too often has to advertise itself into notice. Benevolent objects have to devise all sorts of methods to awaken the attention and to stimulate the interest of the world. There is a lack of sensibility in our charitable emotions. But with our Lord, there was a quickness to perceive need, a sensibility which responded to the gentlest and least conspicuous appeals of want. Longfellow in picturing the story of Bartimæus speaks of the beggar's cry rising shrill and loud over the clamour of the multitude that rebuked him. But amid the confused noise of cries and counter-cries, the cry of Bartimæus would not have evoked the ready response, unless there had been in Christ that sensitive sympathy with men's needs which showed itself in quick discrimination between cry and cry. He ever showed this responsiveness of loving readiness. Here, amid the clamour of the crowd, He detects the voice of want, just as at another time He knew at once when the weary and suffering woman laid a trembling finger on His robe. His love seemed to know instinctively the appeal of

need. Want and pain did not require to thrust themselves forward with fierce insistency as into the presence of a reluctant benefactor. His spirit vibrated with quick sympathy towards human sorrow, and His hand was ever forward to help. Even before appeal was made, He was swift to bless. In the confused scene at Gethsemane, amid the clash of weapons and in the doubtful lantern-light, His hand was promptly reached forth to heal the ear of Malchus. His love was of that delicate and responsive order which makes kindness twice welcome in being so obviously the outcome of a sympathetic and ready heart.

There was decision. Love may be sensitive in quality, but it may lack firmness. Many souls, full of exquisite sensibility of affection, have very little persistence in their love. They are quickly aroused to emotion, but they are also quickly hushed into inactivity. There is a benevolence which cannot stand before clamour, and which dies away before opposition. Christ showed a love which was as stalwart and staunch as it was quick and sensible. No clamour or noise of discountenancing crowds could stay the march of His love. Jesus in the midst of the outcry against Bartimæus, stood and commanded him to be brought.

And then occurred one of those scenes which is

characteristic of life. Jesus stood. He issued His command. In one moment the clamouring crowd changes its demeanour. As long as Bartimæus was only an importunate and unsupported petitioner the crowd regarded him as an impertinence, and were eager to clamour him down ; but when the Prophet, the centre of that day's interest, turns upon him His attention and commands him to come forward, the crowd changes its tone. Now they are full of congratulatory patronage. "Be of good cheer. Rise : "He calleth thee." Nothing succeeds like success. The voice of the crowd is often but the echo of the strongest voice in its midst. A little firmness, and the strong man brings the whole multitude over to his side. The man who knows what he means and has the requisite firmness to pursue it regardless of noise, is like a solid mass floating on the surface of the water which draws the purposeless jetsam to its side. The decisiveness of Christ's benevolence exercised a protection over Bartimæus. His love towards him was of that firm and courageous order which shelters as well as benefits its object.

There was judgment. Our poor fond human love often lacks judiciousness. In its eagerness to be kind it forgets to be wise in its kindness. It may even, like Lear, be foolish in its benefactions. But the love of Christ is judicious and therefore deli-

berate. He does not heal the blind man all at once. There is a pause : there is a question. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" A needless question, men might say, when the sightless eyes of Bartimæus so unmistakably told his need and pleaded his desire. But there is wisdom in the question. The need was obvious, but it was well that the man should express it. The interchange of speech created a feeling of confidence ; the bond between him and Christ became one through which moral sympathy might flow. A cure wrought by a touch and without a word might have been deemed merely the exertion of some strange and magical force, and not the action of deliberate, conscious, and sympathetic love. But the delay and the spoken words, the man telling his need, the Christ graciously and personally responding to it, these things forged a link of love and understanding. It was no cold exercise of power : it was no heartless magic which restored the sight. It was power exercised by wise and loving sympathy. There was more than physical helpfulness extended to this blind man. Loving kindness spoke in Christ's action.

Here we touch a principle which may shed light upon the mystery of prayer. Why should we go through the form of asking God to help us, when God, if He be all-knowing, knows all about our

needs? If He be all-powerful, He can help us. If He be all good, He will. What need is there, then, of prayer? But is prayer only so to be measured? Is the establishment of sympathetic confidence between the soul of man and the love of God to count as nothing? We know that our children earnestly wish for some plaything. We do not always give it. We wait to be asked, because we love to hear their earnest little voices lifted up in hesitating request. Above all, we love to hear the expression of their trust. A greater thing than the acquisition of some boon is the happy realisation of the bond of love and confidence between father and child and between God and man. The meeting of trusting need and kindly power develops mutual understanding. The heart-ties grow strong. The bond which unites is not that of mere material dependence. It is one of personal sympathy. And Christ sought, by the exercise of a judicious and deliberate love, to bind by such a bond Bartimæus to Himself.

There was capability. Human love is often powerless. It yearns to help, but there is the sad and pathetic limitation of its power. With Christ love and power were one. "Receive thy sight." The words are spoken and Bartimæus looks up. His eyes rest upon Him who has shielded him from

the opposing clamours of the crowd, called him to His side, and restored to him his sight. He sees Him who has given him the very thing which the world could not give. Christ bestowed upon Bartimæus the faculty which enables him once more to direct his life. The restoration of sight is restoration to his true and complete manhood. He can see things as they are. He may go which way he will, and needs not to depend on any to lead him by the hand ; for he is no longer blind.

It is this which Christ can bestow on all. He came to give light to the world ; and what was this but the power of seeing things as they are, and the power of free movement ? It is the power to see in their true relationship the great forces of life—the world, self, God—the force without us, the force within us, and the power above us. It is the power to see God as He is—in His purity and lovingness as well as in His might. It is the power to see ourselves as we are in our weakness and dependence, in our sinfulness and foolishness. It is the power to see the world and life as they are, and therefore to see life not as the opportunity of accumulating the things which perish, but as the opportunity of being what we ought to be, and of doing what we ought to do. But the light which He bestows gives the power of free movement. It is the opportunity of asserting

ourselves, in spite of the clamour of the world, with all our strength and might, on the side of truth and of righteousness, of love and of God. It is the opportunity of ceasing from self to find ourselves, and of so living that Christ may live in us. It is the opportunity of receiving and revealing His light, that we may live as God's children in the midst of the blind world which still is sighing and groaning for the manifestation of the Son of God.

THE RESTORED DEMONIAK

"Howbeit Jesus suffered him not"

MARK V. 19

THE RESTORED DEMONIAK

OUR Lord had delivered this man from the power of that sad and inscrutable disorder called "demoniacal possession." The man had been the victim of insane paroxysms which had rendered him a misery to himself and a terror to others. His cure, however, had been complete. He had been seen sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind. Our Lord was about to leave the neighbourhood out of deference to the nervous worldliness of the inhabitants. The restored man did not wish to be left behind. He clung to his deliverer. He asked to be allowed to accompany Him. He came down to the water's edge, where our Lord was about to embark, and there he made his petition. "When He was come to the ship," we read, "he that had the devils besought Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not."

The scene represents, if I mistake not, one stage in the education of a soul. It is a stage in that pro-

cess which is of the supremest importance to us all. If life means anything—if it is not a tale told by idiots, signifying nothing—it is a process of education ; and the discipline and training of character are for us at least its supremest end. The full significance of this training, and the joys consequent upon it, belong to the revelations of the other world. In this stage of existence we can, however, realise the high value of the education to which all are subjected, and every stage in that education is of real interest. It will therefore be of some help if we observe how our Lord carries on the education of this man, whom He had released from a dark and terrible bondage.

It is education through a refusal : and the refusal bears a threefold message to the man—a message to his will, to his thought, and to his heart.

There is a message to his will. By this refusal the man is being educated towards a necessary independence. This will appear if we reflect on the story. The petition which the man made was not a wrong or unreasonable one. On the contrary, it was a pleasing and natural request. Doubtless his heart was filled with grateful affection towards one who had wrought him such a wonderful kindness ; and he earnestly wished never to be parted from the side of his benefactor. This was a very fitting

and right desire. But Christ refused his request. Now the refusal of a natural and innocent request shows either wisdom or indifference. None will charge our Lord with indifference. We must seek in our Master's wise and loving regard for this man the reason for this refusal.

This reason is not difficult to find. Beneath the wish which showed such grateful affection, another feeling was lurking in the man's mind. It was not only gratitude, I think, which prompted the wish to be near Christ. It was a haunting sense of insecurity. Those who have had experience of some of the aspects of nervous disorder know the terrible character of the fears which haunt the minds of those who are its victims. The sufferers who have lapsed into what is called an anæmic condition, or whose weary and weakened nerves have slipped out of their own control, are beset by a terrible self-distrust. They cling to the strong who have ministered to them. They demand to have doctor or nurse perpetually at their side. They lose self-possession and self-reliance. They yield to the invasion of imaginary fears; their mental vigour and moral fibre degenerate. In cases like these much responsibility falls on the guardians of health—weakness on their part may be followed by increased degeneracy on the sufferer's part. Their

duty is not to allow this weak and despondent disposition to grow. They deprecate a foolish, pitying love on the part of friends. They know that to humour is to degrade their patient. Separation from the compassionate glance of friends, an isolation among those who will supply the wholesome stimulus of self-exertion, the presence even of unsympathetic companions may be desirable. It is needful that the patient should be compelled to exert will and effort, lest undue reliance on others should end in a paralysing weakness. It is needful, even by means apparently harsh, to restore wholesome self-confidence and to banish hysterical self-distrust.

We all know cases of this kind. The germ of this fatal self-distrust is, I think, discernible in this man's request. It is not gratitude alone which makes him desire to be with Christ. He is conscious of a sense of insecurity when our Lord is not near. He feels that the foe is really gone only as long as Christ is at hand. He has a haunting dread of the return of the malady should he be left alone.

That sense of insecurity has its root in the imagination, and in the imagination unwholesomely stimulated in consequence of nervous weakness. It is much better that he should discover the complete-

ness of his cure by living away from Christ, than that, living near to Christ, he should be troubled by a perpetual doubt of the reality of his emancipation. It is a case in which it is well that he should be thrown upon his own resources. Alone he must learn to muster courage and faith. A kind of independence must be forced upon him. He must resume the prerogative of his manhood as a self-directing, self-controlling being; he must learn in isolation—and he can only learn it in isolation—the phantom character of the fears which assail him. It was a step in his education. His request was a very natural one, but to grant it would not have been good for the man himself. There is discipline and there is training in the incident. The wish was not wrong; but Christ was wise. He that had the devils besought Him that he might be with Him; “howbeit Jesus suffered him not.”

This step is one which enters into all education, human and divine.

Among ourselves, a very early stage of life throws upon us the necessity of self-exertion. The mother places her child upon the ground. The little one, which it is a joy to her to caress and fondle and carry, must not rely upon a mother's arms. It must learn its own capacities. It must learn to walk and run alone. The schoolmaster acts simi-

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larly. He is not content with the pupil who works well only when the teacher is at his side. Intellectual perception of the thing taught must be followed by the effort of mind which appropriates, weighs, and assimilates. As we must learn to walk alone, so we must learn to think alone. The human love which trains young bodies and young brains is seldom so unwisely tender as to save young life from the necessity of self-exertion and the training to self-reliance. To bring them to true manhood, the lesson of wholesome independence must be taught.

Divine education pursues the same order. Man is placed on the earth, a lonely being in the midst of scenes and powers, in the presence of whose vastness and majesty he perceives his own terrifying insignificance. But the necessity of his position casts him upon his own resources. He must exert himself; he discovers himself in effort. He finds how much he can do for self-support and self-guidance in the midst of material forces stronger than himself. He learns healthful self-reliance. It is a stage in his education.

As the divine wisdom dealt with man on the earth, so the wisdom of Christ dealt with His Church. He came into the world; He dwelt among His followers; but He did not remain with

them always. "A little while," He said, "and ye shall not see Me." When He had sufficiently taught, and trained them to stand alone, He left them. In the Christian character independence and self-reliance were to be features.

We find the same principle in our own individual lives. The circumstances of our life bring us under the influence of some teacher, who is able to unfold to us the wonders of the spiritual world. He shows us that the outside of things, which we have been regarding as all, is far from the whole of life, and is only, indeed, its husk. We are drawn under his influence—we become aware of a spiritual power in our lives which we never realised before. We learn to rest on the teaching which is so wondrous and helpful to our spirits. But the same Providence which brought us under this influence carries us away from it. We move elsewhere, or the teacher is called to other work or to some other place. The spiritual guide is no longer near us. We are thrown on ourselves. Reliance on Paul or Apollos or Cephas is not good. In the Christian character, self-reliance must have its place. In the sphere of religious experience, as well as in the sphere of ordinary education, we are taught that self-reliance is needful for the discipline and perfecting of our manhood.

But besides a message of self-reliance, which I have called a message to his will, Christ, by His refusal, sent a message to the man's powers of spiritual perception.

It will be well to recall once more the feelings which were working in the man's spirit when he besought Christ that he might be with Him. He longed for some security against the recurrence of the malady. He felt a nervous dread of its return. He wanted strong and unquestionable evidence that it was gone, and gone for ever. He thought that nothing would give him more effectively the sense of security he craved than to be near to Christ. If only his eye could rest upon his deliverer ; if only he could assure himself by touch and sight that the Strong One who had banished the Evil was near at hand, he would feel safe.

But Christ wanted him to go beyond this low state of faith. He wished him to realise those great and spiritual powers of which outward things convey but a passing expression. Christ indeed recognised that there was a stage of experience in which some visible physical evidence was desirable. He had shown that He did so when He suffered the demons to take possession of the swine. The flight and destruction of the herd in the waters gave an assurance to the poor, weakened brain of the sufferer that

his enemies had really gone. Whilst he was in the thralldom of this malady Christ used means adapted to his weakness. But now matters are changed. The man is restored. He is in his right mind ; and he must exercise the self-reliance of his restored manhood. He must also advance in perception as a spiritual being. He must lean no longer upon the earthly and material presence of Christ. He must be at rest even when Christ is not seen by the eye of the flesh. He must realise the spiritual and eternal presence which never fails. Christ would have him walk by faith and not by sight. He must pass from the material to the spiritual.

The step is one which has its analogy in all education. Life, as we know it, is constantly forcing us away from that which is discerned by sense to that which is discerned by some capacity other than sense.

An ordinary education begins with the concrete. We begin with the coloured beads upon the wire, and we learn to count ; but we leave these behind, and we reach figures, and from figures we go forward to algebraical signs and symbols. We begin with pictures ; but we go on to letters, and from letters to words, and from words to ideas. We leave the concrete : we advance to the abstract. We are familiarised with the rudiments of learning by the

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use of childish signs and material symbols, but when we become men we put away these childish things. The intellectual takes the place of the material. The appeal to the eye and the hand becomes less and less ; the abstract, the philosophical becomes more and more.

The education which presides over the growth of man and the development of his religious ideas moves in the same way. To clear their notions, or to help their feelings, men make to themselves idols : these symbols of their deities helped them to realise the power and presence of the god. Those to whom a higher range of perception was given rose above this earthly level, but as a rule idol worship prevailed in the world. But the education of mankind did not cease. The way was prepared for the great spiritual teacher. He came who abolished idols. The teaching that God was a Spirit whenever it was realised and accepted, made the idol needless, if not impossible. The concrete symbol was felt not to be wanted. God was near to all. In Him we live and move and have our being.

But the education of man from the material to the spiritual was to go beyond the abolition of idols. Christ revealed God to man. He lived and wrought and taught among men, who found joy and comfort in His presence. But even this revelation was not

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to be dependent on His continued presence in the flesh. "It is expedient for you that I go away," our Lord said to His disciples. The spiritual presence was to be a substitute for the physical presence; the Eternal Spirit was to take the place of the visible Christ. "If I go not away the Comforter will not come to you." The disciples were to learn to rely on that presence which was spiritual and eternal, and not on the sweet comfort of the material presence of Christ.

It was a hard lesson, but our Lord was earnest to teach it. "Touch Me not," He said to the eager Mary Magdalene when she reached forth her impatient hand, longing to cling to Him. There was a presence which, when He had ascended, would be more than a substitute for His bodily presence. "Touch Me not—for I am not ascended to My Father."

It was a hard lesson, but it was learned. The Apostle Paul seized it when he said, "Though we have known Christ, after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." St. James learned it when he thought no longer of his blood relationship with Christ, and did not seek to describe himself as the brother of our Lord, but as the servant of Jesus Christ (James i. 1). The spiritual bond had entirely superseded the physical tie. The lesser presence was lost in the larger.

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The latter life of the Church has given illustrations of similar steps forward. Material notions of Christ's presence clung for a time to the minds of half-pagan converts. In modern times people who are loose in thought or limp in faith find comfort in cherishing approximately materialistic ideas. But the movement towards the spiritual and eternal goes onward. The form is less and less : the spirit is more and more. The letter killeth : the spirit giveth life. And in the vision of the perfected age of the Church, which the sacred seer saw, the last outward sign and material token of worship has ceased. For imperfect and immature spiritual natures the house of prayer with its hallowed associations and its beauteous order and impressive service is helpful, nay, for most, perchance at present for all, needful ; but for those who have reached the eternal presence churches are needed no more. "I saw no temple therein ; for the Lord God and the Lamb are the Temple thereof."

The same course may be noticed in the history of religious evidences. The slow appreciation of the reality and ceaselessness of the divine presence and operations has led to a change of feeling with regard to outward and visible tokens of heavenly power. Men were inclined at one time to demand miracles :—"Show us a sign." "What sign showest Thou ?"

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Our Lord discouraged this disposition. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." To Him spiritual and ethical force was the highest force. The kingdom of heaven was within. No outward pomp and no startling signs could compensate for the lack of the inward appeal and the inward response. He sought to draw men from the contemplation of the outward and material to the inward and spiritual. Signs and wonders were at the best but expressions of the working of that eternal force of His Father which was ceaselessly working. To realise that power and the perpetuity of its operations was more to the soul of man than any feeling of amazement wrought by occasional or startling manifestations of power. To those who realised God everywhere and in all things, the miracle which appealed to the physical senses was not needful. Those who rested on God could do without symbols and wonders to attest His presence. They needed not to be assured that He was near. They had learned to walk by faith and not by sight.

Thus the divine education, like the human education, carries us from the sign to the thing signified. We are taught to do without the support of those things which appeal to the senses. We are drawn away from the material: the physical is but the symbol: we must enter within the veil; we must perceive the

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spiritual behind the sensible ; and in perceiving this, we reach the eternal. Our perceptions are enlarged. We dwell in God and God in us. We are one with Christ and Christ with us. The divine presence needs no material attestation, for we dwell in Him whose presence is life-giving and inescapable. It was to this Christ sought to lead this man whom He had healed. He fain would enlarge the man's spiritual perceptions. He suffered him not to be with Him, because He sought to place him where he might realise that eternal and never-failing presence which would satisfy and sustain him always.

Besides these two messages, Christ, by His refusal, sent a message to the man's heart.

Our Lord points out to him the true and noble aim of life. Life is not for self, but for others. Man restored to power must not think merely of what he would like. It might be pleasant and comforting to be with his deliverer. It might give him a sense of security to be always near Him whose power had banished the hideous torment of that strange malady, but it was more fit and more noble that his restored powers should be employed for others. "Go home to thy friends," is Christ's command. Instead of the joy of being near Christ, Christ gives him a duty. Instead of allowing him to think how he will

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best secure his own peace of mind, Christ sends him to devise how he may best help others. The man's heart is appealed to by the thought of the needs of others. It was true that those friends had not shown much sympathy with the poor man in his sufferings. They had been more kin than kind to him. But the man had met with a wonderful experience. He had stepped from thralldom to freedom. He had gained knowledge of a love and of a power which were above all else, and he could think with interest and with sympathy of those to whom this wonderful revelation was as yet a thing unknown. He can be a help to others.

This is our Lord's message to his heart. It is an illustration of the method in which every new power and even fresh experience carries with it responsibility. The gift which love gives us becomes love in our heart, and we are taught to minister the like gift to others. Freely we have received, freely we fain would give. Love is contagious ; nay, it is more, it is infectious. It awakens sympathy as well as gratitude. The heart which has been blessed goes out to others. The life which has been enriched must be spent for others.

"Go home to thy friends." This command, which was designed to awaken the sympathy of the man

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for his kinsfolk, was to be a means of benefit to the man himself. The very independence which Christ desired him to win must be won by self-forgetful effort among others. For independence is seldom forced upon us as a naked and unaccompanied good. It is not presented to us as a theory to be recognised in our intellectual life. We reach it rather by practical experience. We find it by having to do something which naturally and necessarily calls forth our own unrecognised powers. Some useful and inevitable task is set before us. It is not the gaunt figure of independence, lonely and fear-awakening, which is presented to us. It is more often some duty which we have to do, and in doing which we discover self-reliance. This is the merciful way in which kindly education hides from us the stages we are taking. We do not see the goal; we are bidden to walk a path which, unknown to ourselves, leads to the goal. It was thus Christ dealt with the healed demoniac. He did not, like the philosophical psychologist, give him a lecture on the value of self-reliance. He gave him work to do. "Go home to thy friends and tell them." He is bidden to be a witness of the strong and helpful love which had blessed his life. He is given an occupation which will call forth his resources, and in doing so will restore his self-reliance.

All true education pursues the same method. The child is not merely told to try and walk. Some object to be reached is put before him. The pupil is not simply bidden to think. Some definite problem is submitted to his thoughts. The exercise of the faculty is not stated to be the object in view. The exercise of body and mind is brought about by proposing some object to be attained or some task to be accomplished.

If we turn to the divine education of the world the same principle is seen. Man's powers of independence and self-reliance are drawn out by the necessity of work. He must live, and he finds that in order to live he must think and act for himself. Necessity for food and raiment has called forth his activity, his instinctive faculty, his self-reliance. In seeking for desirable objects, he has developed faculties and qualities.

In the same way the followers of Christ became assured of power in the discharge of the duty which our Lord set before them. Their task was to teach all nations. The heroic qualities which stirred the admiration of the world were called forth in the discharge of this high and sacred task. In doing what they were bidden to do they made discovery of the range of those powers with which Christ had endued them, and which otherwise might have remained

unknown and unused. The personal experience of many men since the apostolic age goes in the same direction. They are flung upon their own resources. The support of the religious home or the religious teacher is no longer theirs. They see duties or tasks where before they saw safeguards and guidance. They must rely upon themselves; something has to be done, and the former guides are no longer near. They must summon their judgment, their moral sense, their energy to their aid; and in the simple effort to do their duty effectively they become independent centres of an influence, which without this enforced experience could never have been learnt. Through duty done they gain an independent and self-reliant manliness of habit.

Thus in losing self in ministry to others man finds himself. This, which is a law of true life for all, has a special blessing for those who are haunted by some self-conscious fear. Occupation on behalf of others is the very best medicine. Imperceptibly they are withdrawn from the self-observation which is so injurious. Other interests awaken; their sympathetic emotions are drawn forth by ministry, and the feeble and diffident, the self-conscious and self-absorbed become transformed; they grow courageous, resolute, self-reliant. The blessing which they them-

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selves most need they find in seeking to bless others.

The story is once more the story of Christ's thoughtfulness for the character-growth of those whom He helps.

The lesson of the story is simple enough.

Whatever our Lord did for human need is a type and picture of the method by which the Divine Love deals with the sons of men. The teaching of the story enables us to realise something of the quality of this love.

It avoids the weaknesses which wait on our poor human love. There are two weaknesses which disfigure human love.

One of these is the weakness of strong natures, the weakness of egotism. Men of strong and energetic character bestow their benefits, and in doing so seek to enlist men among their own adherents. They are kind and generous, but they like to be the centre of a band of admiring followers. They are forceful and resolute, and they draw men after themselves. Such men can seldom avoid the weakness which delights in its own pre-eminence. They become leaders of parties. But the leaders of parties can hardly be the saviours of men. The love which saves society looks beyond the benefit bestowed and the attachment to which the kindness gives rise ; it

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looks to the ultimate good of those whom it benefits. It seeks to strengthen character, to consolidate and elevate faith, and to turn into channels of good the energy which comes from fresh life and new experience. It is heedless of self or its own supremacy or leadership. Pure love is above the weakness which waits on strong natures.

It is equally above the weakness of weak natures. Egotism is the weakness of the strong, and sentiment the weakness of weak natures. Love in these lacks force and virility. It is easily won to do anything which the loved one asks. It yields to every request ; it may feebly disapprove, but it lacks the courage to say "No." It gives because it has a foolish fondness which fears to imperil affection by refusal. Pure love rises above this weakness, precisely because it is pure. It cannot deny itself, and therefore it can deny the request of one it loves.

Such is the quality of the love which Christ shows in the story. It is a love pure, unselfish, and sagacious for the good of the man. He was firm to refuse the request. He sought to strengthen this man by the robust experience of isolation for which he was now fitted. He sent him into healthy solitude, and in doing so He forged links which bound him more closely to Himself. Christ detached the man from Himself that He might attach him to

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Himself for ever. The love which can do this is the love which can educate men to nobler character, loftier vision, and finer use of life. Such is the love by which our lives are surrounded. We are in the hands of One who watches for our good, and who knows when to grant and when to refuse our wishes. When we understand this truth life becomes easier. We know that all things work together for good. We know that when our prayers are offered we can rest. We know that it is "goodness still which grants it or denies." We know more ; we know that the wisdom and love which order all can grant by seeming to deny, can grant in some nobler way or in some other world.

Realise, then, life as education. Do not expect to gain all that you wish. Do not fret, or impatiently struggle after things which you desire, even though you think that they would be for your good. Be content with such things as you have. Get rid of over-much caring about yourself or your own likes. Think less of self and more of others. Go and work for them. Find out their needs and minister to them. Learn to do Christ's will among those whom Providence sends to your care. Show Him to others in a life and ministry of love, and you will find Him in unexpected places. Every face which brightens at your ministry will be

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Christ's face to you, and you will know in the kindnesses which love prompts you to do that the smallest thing done for the least is done unto Him, and every corner of your life will be filled with His presence.

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